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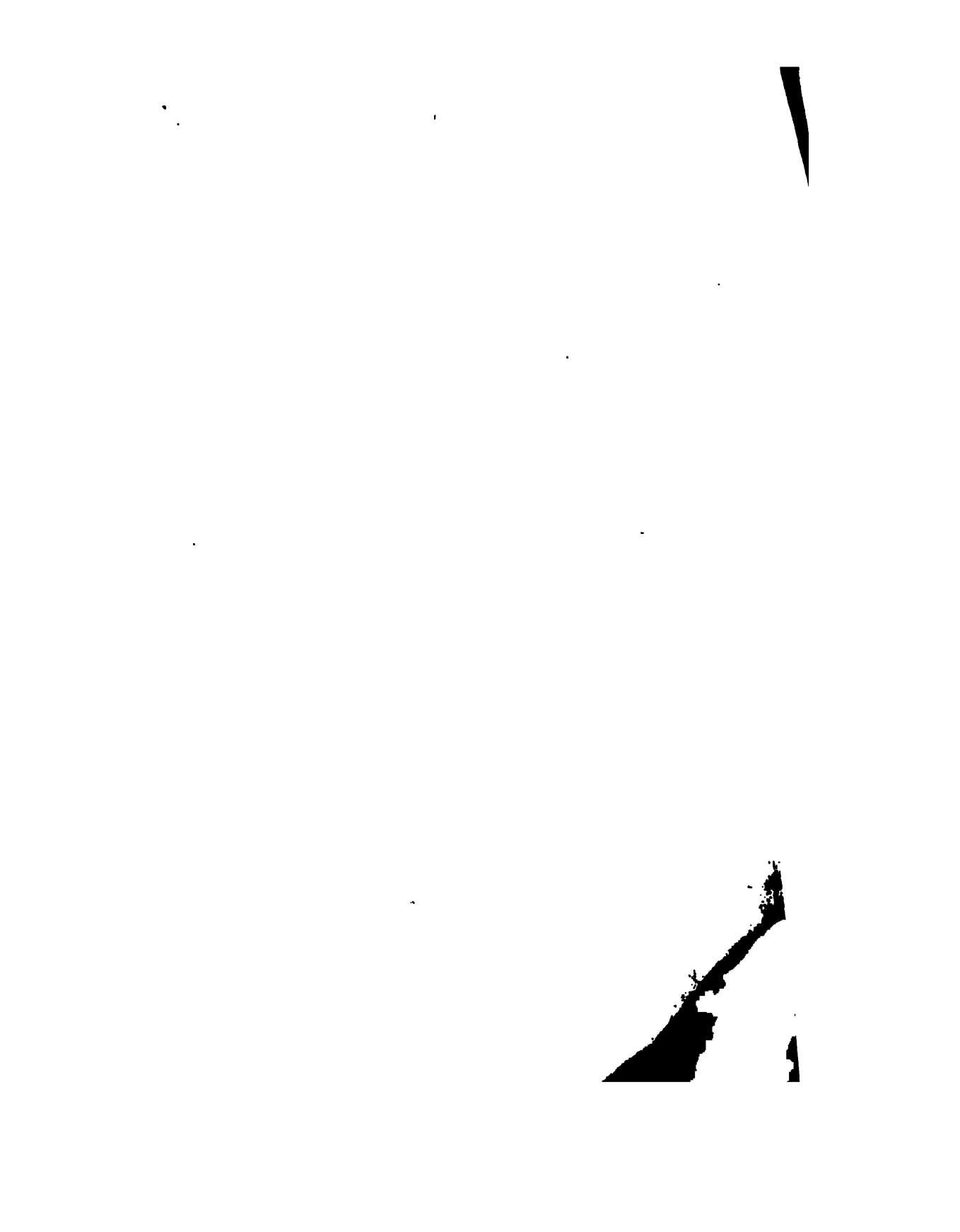

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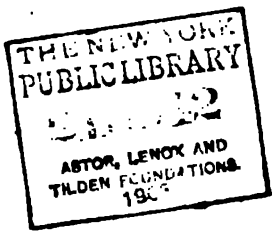

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THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

CONTENTS OF VOL. XVII.

SERMON.	PAGE.
CCCXXXIX.—Religious Discipline of the Thoughts—By Rev. Rufus Anderson, D.D.	1
CCCXL.—A New Year's Sermon—By Rev. Geo. B. Cheever.	11
CCCXLI.—The Great Separation—By Rev. Albert Barnes.	25
CCCXLII.—The Sovereign Purpose of God to save his People an Encouragement to Effort—By Rev. Albert Barnes.	36
CCCXLIII.—The Sea Giving up its Dead—By Rev. Wm. R. Williams, D.D.	49
CCCXLIV.—Religion Our Life—By Rev. Baron Stow.	60
A Short Sermon.	68
Covenant.	71
CCCXLV.—Fathers Invited Into the Ark—By Rev. Milton Badger.	73
CCCXLVI.—Why Should the Work Cease?—By Rev. Wm. B. Lewis.	83
CCCXLVII.—Excuses for Not Being a Christian.	88
CCCXLVIII.—Prayer a Means of Revivals.	94
CCCXLIX.—The Triumph of the Cross—By Rev. Hubbard Winslow.	97
CCCL.—Missionaries Purified by Affliction—By Rev. Frederick B. Thomson.	106
God.	120
CCCLI.—The Tokens of Perdition—By Rev Geo. B. Ide.	121
CCCLII.—Estimates of Life—By Rev. Tryon Edwards.	137
CCCLIII.—A Perpetual Revival—By Rev. Leverett Griggs.	145
CCCLIV.—The Lord our Righteousness—By Rev. Gorham D. Abbott.	157
CCCLV.—The Future Triumphs of the Gospel—By Rev. John S. C. Abbott.	169
CCCLVI.—The Spirit of Missions—By Rev. I. N. Wyckoff, D.D.	177
Necessity of Revivals of Religion.	188
How to Feel Our Sins.	190
The Joys of Repentance.	193
CCCLVII.—Spiritual Worship—By Rev. Mark Hopkins, D.D.	191
CCCLVIII.—Christian Courtesy—By Rev. John Mitchell.	209
CCCLIX.—Progress, The Law of the Missionary Work—By Rev. Thomas H. Skinner, D.D.	217
CCCLX.—Abandonment of God Deprecated by the Aged—By Rev. Chas. S. Porter.	241
CCCLXI.—The Whole Family of Christ—By Rev. A. T. Chester.	250
CCCLXII.—How Ought I to Keep the Sabbath?	260
CCCLXIII.—The Great Conflict—By Rev. Enoch Pond, D.D.	265
Conviction and Conversion.	282

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THE AMERICAN

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SERMON CCCXXXIX.

BY REV. RUFUS ANDERSON, D. D.

ONE OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE OF THE THOUGHTS.

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—2 Cor. x: 5.

Pious people often are wanting in control over their religious affections. They seem not to have the power of fixing them long on any object. Hence their religious feelings seldom rise into an elevated devotional frame.

Now if the nature of the difficulty in this case is not well understood, mistaken remedies may be applied, and disappointment be the consequence. The chief difficulty generally is in a want of due control over the *thoughts;* for the thoughts and affections are most intimately connected. The heart is able to love only such objects as it sees; and it can look at them only through the medium of the understanding. That is, feeling is awakened, modified, influenced by means of thought. Had the pious man more power over his thoughts, he would have more power over his affections. Could he fix the one on the proper objects of holy love, he would succeed better in fixing the other on the same objects. These objects he loves no more ardently and steadily, because he has them so little in sight. The inquiry suggested by the text, is therefore of great importance, viz:

How we may succeed in bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; in other words, how we may acquire a religious control over our thoughts.

And the inquiry is in the highest degree practical, because every one is more or less a thinking being, and has thoughts for which he is accountable, and which it is infinitely important for him to regulate by christian principles.

I propose to illustrate,

I. The nature of this discipline or government of the thoughts.

II. Its importance; and,

III. The manner of acquiring it.

I. Let us *first* consider the *nature* of this discipline. This will be made best to appear by some familiar illustrations.

We will, then, suppose a pious man, but wanting in control over his thoughts, to be reading in the scriptures. He is really desirous of understanding what he reads, and, of course, makes an effort to read with attention; and for a short time his attention is fixed. But this is for a short time only; for soon his mind is invaded and his thoughts are diverted by another train of ideas foreign from the chapter before him, until, at length, he is startled at perceiving how much he has read that has failed to awaken in his mind so much as a single idea.

The same man enters his closet for prayer. He assumes a reverent posture, and commences his petitions in an audible voice, as helping the attention. Meanwhile he discovers another train of ideas, or, more probably, successive, broken trains. His endeavors to expel them do but increase their number, and distract his attention the more. Were his prayer written out, and the intrusive thoughts interlined as they actually rise in his mind, we should have a painful illustration how his attention is divided while he is addressing the Most High.

So in public prayer, in the house of God. One person leads in the prayer, and all in the congregation profess to offer up the same petitions. But suppose the heart-searching God were to put forth his finger, and write the prayer upon the wall; and that he were to write also, in parallel columns to it, the actual thoughts, meanwhile, of each professed worshipper. What a fearful exhibition there would be of thoughts foreign to the occasion;—about business! about dress! about worldly pleasures, past, present, or anticipated! And were it possible for these thoughts all to speak out at the same time, what a confusion of sounds should we hear! Yet something like this, too often, must our public prayers be, as God hears them. For to the ear of God, every thought has a voice.

And so entirely wanting in religious discipline are the thoughts of many persons, that even the mere allusions in the prayer of him who leads the devotions, are enough to keep their thoughts wandering. Thus: the minister prays for those, who "go down to the sea in ships, and do business on the great waters." This sends off their thoughts to their own ships, or their foreign investments, or the state of the markets, and their prospects of loss or gain. The minister prays for rain in a time of drought, or for fruitful seasons, or he gives thanks for an abundant harvest. This sets them thinking of their crops, and of the influence the drought, or rain, or harvest, will have on the price of some one or more of the products of the earth. The minister prays for our rulers; and in how many minds does this excite thoughts of the latest intelligence, or else of political schemes, prospects, or results.

Similar remarks might be made concerning other exercises of the house of God. Indeed, who of us would be willing to have the mere intellectual history of the hour he spends in this holy place (i. e. of his thoughts merely,) written, by the omniscient God, for the perusal of his most intimate friend? I believe, not one.

Again: one great reason why so little time is spent by christians in solitary meditation on eternal things is, that they find these meditations so difficult and unprofitable, for want of command over their thoughts. I venture to affirm, that no pious man can pursue a continuous train of private religious meditation for half an hour, without experiencing great delight, or at least receiving much benefit. But let the man, I have supposed, sit down to meditate. In his private meditation, his mind is even more wandering and ungovernable than in his secret prayer. He then gave utterance to his thoughts audibly in words, which had a tendency to fix the attention. But he meditates in silence. Look at him for a moment, in this act of an intelligent moral being. He has determined to meditate, we will suppose, on the Savior's last sufferings. No subject is so well fitted to seize fast hold on the mind. His first endeavor is, to form a distinct conception of the scene. Having done this, he proposes to realize who the person is, that hangs upon the accursed tree. This is the precise object of his meditation. Seated in his closet, or in walking to and fro in some retired place, he runs his thoughts over the history of the Savior, in search of the proofs that he was truly the Son of God. Thus far all is well. But he soon gets into difficulty. His mind will not *dwell* on any one thing; it hurries rapidly over every thing, giving no one thing an opportunity to make an impression; until at length the continuity of his thoughts is broken, the unity of their object is destroyed, and the power of attention lost. He has failed utterly; and such failures, being repeated, discourage him from repeating the attempt at religious meditation.

One more illustration of the want of a religious government of the thoughts. It is, or should be, a grand question with every true christian, how he shall ensure the recurrence of religious thoughts in the intervals of his secular business, during the day. Now it is not only right, but it is duty, provided our business be lawful, so to give our thoughts to it as to perform it well; and many kinds of business require, for the time, an undivided attention. In such cases, every thing else may properly be excluded from the mind. Now the man of undisciplined mind, whom we have taken for our illustrations, *resolves* in the morning to think of God often during the day, in the short intervals of his business. So far as resolution is concerned, all is well; and he also prays that he may frequently revert to the great and good Author of all his mercies during the day, and expects to secure the result by the mere force of his morning resolutions and prayers. Vain expectation! And it is so, because God will no more exert a miraculous influence on the mind, in answer to prayer, than he will upon the body. As well might we expect that mere prayer would make the cripple walk, as make his undisciplined mind operate as if it were disciplined. Divine agency, if it were not put forth in accordance with the laws or nature of the mind, (as it always is,) would be miraculous. Now the man has overlooked this fact, in preparing for his daily vocation; and no sooner do his thoughts

get into the tide of business, than they yield to the influence of habit and circumstances, and are swept entirely away, notwithstanding his resolutions, prayers, and expectations to the contrary.

The difficulty is not that this man performs his business without *any* reference to God's will; for we have supposed him to be a pious man, and no doubt there are many such pious men. His duty to God may have been the motive which led him forth to his business. But he has so long been accustomed to give his mind exclusively to thoughts of worldly things during the business hours of the day, and there is such a lamentable want of intellectual discipline with respect to religious subjects, that nothing he can do in the morning, will, of itself, be sufficient to remedy the evil. It is necessary that he should train and accustom his thoughts to rise to God at noon, and in the short intervals of business, as he has taught them to do in the morning before the business of the day commences, and in the evening after it is finished. What I mean, is substantially illustrated in the father of a family engaged in business in a foreign land. He does not think of the objects of his fond affection, now far away, merely morning and evening, but his thoughts revert to them whenever they can be spared from the business which called him away. And so it should be with the christian, in respect to the objects and scenes of his heavenly home.

Nothing more need be said to show the *nature* of the intellectual discipline we are recommending. It appears to be *the power of fixing our thoughts steadily, and at pleasure, on religious subjects.* In secret prayer, it is the power of thinking of nothing beside the subjects of our petitions. In public prayer, it is the power of making the petitions of him who leads the devotions our own, and of excluding all other thoughts. In praise, it is the power of throwing the whole soul into this delightful exercise. In hearing the preached word, it is the power of giving a fixed, wakeful, undisturbed attention to the preacher. In meditation, it is the power of pursuing one single train of religious thought, and shutting out all others. Amid the secular occupations of the day, it is the power of sending up the thoughts to God in the frequent intervals of business.

Having considered the nature of this discipline, let us direct our attention, *secondly*, to its *importance.*

And first, its importance *in the daily reading of the Scriptures.* Evidently we cannot expect the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit on the thoughtless reading of the Scriptures. How vain to expect it! That infinitely intelligent Being always knows where our thoughts are while we read his word, and cannot be deceived by mere words on a thoughtless tongue. Therefore, if you would enjoy those aids, without which even the thoughtful reading of the Scriptures will be of little use, you must read them with a fixed and serious attention. You must be successful in confining your thoughts to the portion you are reading, and must be in earnest to understand it. In the sight of God, the mind is the man. In his sight, moreover, thought and feeling

constitute our actions. He needeth not to look at the outward appearance, to know what the mind is about. Men may be deceived by mere voice and appearances. But with respect to the all-seeing God, in vain is the eye directed to the sacred page, or the inspired word upon the lips, if the thoughts, the mind, in short, the man himself, be occupied about other things.

But let the man who has subjected his thoughts to a thorough religious control, take the inspired volume. He opens it, and is at once prepared for an audience with the Most High. All the powers of his mind are at rest, save what are needed for the present duty. In solemn silence it listens to the voice of the Lord God, having neither eye, ear, nor perception for any thing else. His mind is not impatient of delay; it dwells with searching, prayerful curiosity upon the important sentences and the emphatic words.

With a mind thus under subjection, and even with no more than an ordinary share of intelligence, it is not necessary to read long portions of Scripture at one time. For instance, if the reading be in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the first four verses might furnish full employment for an hour, or even a much longer period. Observe what a number of subjects are suggested by the first verse. It is as follows: "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Half the words in this verse are emphatic. 1. A "condemnation" is spoken of, and we might inquire into its nature, and how it is merited. 2. There is said to be "*no* condemnation;" of course, none in this world, none in the next, no falling from grace, and an absolute certainty of life. 3. It is said there is no condemnation "*now;*" implying that there once was, and delightfully contrasting the present time with some former period. 4. The word "therefore" is used; there is said to be "therefore, now, no condemnation;" thus pointing to some previous conclusive reasoning on this point, to which we might refer. 5. The persons are next described, who are no longer under condemnation, namely, such as are "*in* Christ Jesus;" and the question arises, What is it to be in Christ Jesus? To this (6thly) there is an answer; viz. "Walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Here you perceive, with the easiest possible analysis, at least six subjects of importance; and it would not be difficult to increase the number. Indeed, such is the richness of God's word, that, as the mind with searching interest dwells upon the sacred page, new ideas continually break forth; light gathers upon it; the objects multiply and magnify; until, as when we survey the heavens through a telescope, where, to the unassisted eye, seemed only a few stars, we behold innumerable worlds and suns filling the immensity of the universe. So it is with the word of God, when contemplated through the medium of faith. It is itself a universe, full of glorious objects, among which the soul might expatiate forever.

Again; how important this control *in the services of the sanctuary.* We all come here professedly to worship God, and get religious bene-

fit to our souls. But we must remember that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him," to be acceptable, "must worship him in spirit and in truth;" that is, with the sincere homage of the thoughts and affections. It is certain, also, that our thoughts and affections always go together, and in the nature of things are inseparable. It is impossible to have our thoughts on our worldly business, and our affections, at the same moment, directed towards God. Where the thoughts are, there the affections will be. Therefore, if we would keep our affections on God, while engaged in the services of his house, we must see that he has our thoughts.

Suppose, now, that *we* had the power of self-control, and could say effectually to our worldly thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder;" or as Abraham to his servants, "Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship." How holy, how heavenly God's earthly courts would then seem to us! What a resting place and refuge from worldly cares and labors, and from the bustle, noise and distractions of the world! How would the bands of worldliness which had been gathering around us during the week, be loosed every Sabbath day, and the soul be set free for the love, service and enjoyment of God! Such a power over the attention when in the house of God, though not easily acquired, must be a source of unspeakable pleasure and profit to the possessor.

But no where is the indispensable necessity of control over our thoughts more clearly seen, than in *religious meditation*. The very nature of such meditations supposes a fixed tendency of thought, a continuous train of reflections, in some one direction, on some one subject. That kind of meditation, indeed, which we have in view in this discourse, and which we would earnestly recommend as being especially serviceable to the soul, is a set and solemn employment, not only of the memory and understanding, but of all the powers of the soul, in contemplating some one spiritual subject. Having this power of meditation, and using it frequently, we shall not fail to acquaint ourselves with God and spiritual things. Our joys will be spiritual and enduring. Though we be destitute of earthly friends, and wealth, and the pleasures of the world; though destitute of books, and deprived of all outward means of enjoyment; though alone, amid some boundless desolation, we shall have strong consolation. Our graces will be active and victorious, and the daily joys of heaven will be ours.

Once more. This control of the thoughts, is *the indispensable means of attaining elevated spirituality and holiness*. It is the indispensable means. For, what I now refer to is not a mere condition of the outward life. It is rather a state of mind, in which the soul having, through grace, acquired a new moral nature, the tide of its thoughts and feelings sets naturally and steadily heavenward. Now this state of mind is always produced by the agency of the Holy Spirit; but, at the same time, through the instrumentality of the truth, and never, in any eminent degree, by mere hasty glances, but by fixed and steady contemplations of the truth, and familiar acquaintance with it. In our

sanctification, the Spirit makes no use of truths which are not present in our minds—none of truths, of which the mind at the time is unconscious. Unknown truth, forgotten truth, and disregarded truth, are all alike without influence upon us. On the other hand, sudden and strong perceptions of the truth may exert, instrumentally, and often do exert a strong temporary influence upon us. They may produce conviction of sin; nay, conversion; and, after conversion, such hasty, transient, perceptions of the truth may set us forward rapidly for a time, but they will soon leave us to halt, if not to go backward. On the other hand, that steady, permanent influence, which, through the blessing of the Spirit, keeps the mind always spiritual, and sets us forward every day in holiness, leading us continually onward in attainments of divine knowledge and grace,—*that* influence is secured only by means of the religious subjection of our thoughts, which we are recommending. Such a control over them is not only important to our making elevated attainments in experimental religion, but it is indispensable. In order to this, we *must* be able to command our thoughts in prayer, and in the reading of the bible, and in our songs of praise to God, and in hearing his word, and in our meditations, and in our daily secular vocations.

The nature and importance of a religious discipline of the thoughts have been made sufficiently evident to permit us to pass to our *third* and last grand division of the subject, namely, *how to acquire a religious control of the thoughts.* This is to be done,

I. By bringing our thoughts under the influence of a lively *faith.* A weak faith will never subdue the thoughts. There must be the 'powers of the world to come.' The revelations of faith must stand forth to the mind with a realizing certainty, like the objects of sight.

II. By bringing the thoughts under the influence of *love.* Thought is subject to feeling. The heart governs the understanding. We think most and most easily about that we most love. We must love the truth, if we would come under its controling influence.

III. By bringing the thoughts under the influence of *hope.* Hope is an 'anchor of the soul.' 'We are saved by hope.' It is a powerful principle. Our hopes, if we would get a religious control of our thoughts, must enter 'within the vail.' Our aspirations must extend beyond the world.

IV. By bringing our thoughts under the influence of *a fixed determination.* Our thoughts will not be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ by a slight effort, or in a single day. This is that earnest and protracted contest, which is called the christian warfare. Many seem to regard that warfare as a conflict with outward objects, but it is a conflict within the soul. It is one of thoughts and feelings of opposite character, struggling for the ascendency in the soul. External things may be among the occasions and objects of the warfare, but they are not the combatants. In this warfare our nature and our circumstances are adverse to the victory of our faith. The most holy of us are sanctified but in part, and most of us very imperfectly. Our

faith is imperfect, and its objects are remote; whereas the objects of sense are all about us. The power of custom too, and of long habit, is against us. He who has given his thoughts for twenty years wholly to the world, will not find it easy to walk by faith. He who has grown old in sensual pleasure, will find it still harder. There is indeed but one course for all. We must call in the Spirit of Christ to our assistance, and with his help struggle earnestly and daily for the mastery. With a love for the truth, with determined and persevering efforts, and with dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit, we shall ere long find our rebellious thoughts in the way of being subdued to spiritual obedience. But there must be fixed determination.

V. By taking pains to prepare the mind for the performance of our religious duties, and to guard it against improper influences.

Are you prone to trifling thoughts? Is the time allotted to prayer, or meditation, or any other religious duty, often nearly expired before you can get your mind seriously interested? You may be sure there is something wrong in your treatment of your mind. Either you indulge in vain conversation, or in light reading, or possibly in both. Those are things against which you must guard. Your mind must be subjected to a different treatment, more worthy of its exalted nature and its immortal destiny. Moreover, you should expostulate seriously with yourself before engaging in acts of devotion, and should cherish a more lively sense of the greatness and majesty of Him that speaketh to you when you read the Scriptures, and whom you address in prayer.

Are you prone to a dreamy state of mind,—to have your thoughts wander about without object, build castles in the air, and grieve or rejoice amid fictitious scenes of their own imagining? Such states of mind are far from being uncommon. They are among the easily besetting sins of the young, the ardent, the imaginative, and the lazy and idle. Indeed, where is the man, or the woman, who knows nothing of them? But they are of pernicious tendency. They are hostile to a sound and healthful state, either of the mind, or heart. Saying nothing of the precious time thus wasted, they enfeeble the mind, especially its power of connected, sober thought. They give the heart a taste and passion for unreal things. There is a sort of mental intoxication in such reveries, and the more they are indulged, the more power do they gain over us; until the creating of unreal scenes, as objects of contemplation, becomes one of the habits of our minds. And this habit, carried into our religion, may make our conceptions of the spiritual world strangely unlike the world revealed in the Bible. Our God may cease, in some important respects, to be the true God, and our heaven to be the real heaven; and our religion, perhaps, in some of its grand influential features, may become the mere offspring of the imagination. Now, if this be your state of mind, it cannot be otherwise than dangerous, and it is a formidable obstacle to the strict religious discipline of thought we are inculcating. You should lose no time in applying the appropriate remedy, whatever of labor, or pain, or self-denial it may cost you. This, at least, you must do;—renouncing the works

and the world of fiction, you must come back to sober truth and reality. Your reveries and vain imaginings must be given up, or you will not come under that government of principles, that spiritual subjection of the thinking power of the mind to Christ, which in the text is so emphatically called a "captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Is your mind prone to wander? When you would have it look steadily at heaven, does it turn away to earth, in spite of all your efforts? Here it becomes important to inquire, whether you are careful to avoid all disturbing, distracting influences. We should especially do so on the return of the Sabbath. It may be that your worldly business is continued to a late hour on the evening preceding the Sabbath, and after all is left unfinished. It may be that your reading on the morning of the Sabbath is miscellaneous, or unsuitable, and that your morning conversation is not strictly relevant to the objects of the day. With such defects in the preparation, ought you to expect any thing else than wandering thoughts, and an unsatisfactory day? Did we end our worldly cares at a seasonable hour previous to the Sabbath—did we devote some portion of the previous evening to special meditation and prayer to get our minds in a spiritual frame—and did we guard as we ought against every disturbing influence on the morning of the Sabbath, we should rarely have to complain of wandering, unprofitable thoughts in the services of the sanctuary.

VI. The last direction I would give for acquiring a religious control over our thoughts is, to erect mementoes of spiritual things along the path of our daily business. An ancient heathen monarch is said to have had a servant cry out at his door every morning, "Remember that thou art mortal." This was a memento of an important truth he was prone, in the multitude and pressure of his affairs, to forget. What if the same admonition had been repeated at noon and at night? These would have been so many additional mementoes;—by which I mean certain appropriate expedients to remind us of heavenly things in the intervals of our daily business. Such expedients we frequently employ to remind ourselves of secular engagements and duties, and the more forgetful we are, the more do we employ them. Let us employ them to remind ourselves of the objects of faith. And to this end let us study out the analogies, the resemblances between earthly and heavenly things, and thus associate the two in our minds. In this manner we may fill the whole earth with mementoes of the invisible world, and make every object and place vocal of heaven and of God.

It only remains for each one to inquire, how far his own thoughts have been brought into this blessed captivity. Are we able to read even the shortest chapter in the Bible, without wandering thoughts? Can we pray without them? Can we meditate, even for a short time, without them, upon any one religious subject? Have our thoughts an upward tendency during the day? Let us not lose sight of the importance of this subject to ourselves individually. It is not less im-

portant to us, than the possession of eminent spirituality and holiness. Let us look for divine aid, and not lose sight of the appropriate means, nor of the necessity for immediate and persevering effort. Verily we are recommending a high and invaluable attainment. Whoever of us has his thoughts in spiritual subjection, has gained the entire mastery of them. Not only so, he has fought the grand battle, has performed the most difficult task in life. His is the blessed liberty of the gospel—*the liberty of thought.* His mind is no longer the slave of circumstances; it is dependent on nothing without. At the command of the will, it moves in any direction and to any object. Above all, it can soar upward with angel-flight towards the glorious Sun of Righteousness, and gaze without distraction upon his ineffable effulgence. This is the man to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This is the man to be "fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." This is the man to be "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness."

Let us seriously reflect on the importance of the subject we have been contemplating. Think not that the *heart* can be kept, while the *thoughts* are uncontrollable. It cannot be. Our hearts will never be brought into full captivity to the obedience of Christ, unless our thoughts are. Both must be subdued, or neither will be.

May God, in infinite mercy, bring all our thoughts into this captivity, and draw our souls continually, effectually, and forever towards Himself. *Amen.*

SERMON CCCXL.

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A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

"And all the days of Methusaleh were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died." Genesis v: 26.

NINE HUNDRED YEARS! It almost covers the duration of the antediluvian world. We speak of the age of Bacon, the age of Plato, the age of Burke, characterizing ages by the great men that have marked them. Of Methusaleh there is nothing of greatness recorded, besides the begetting of sons and daughters, some of whom were pious, but the roll of nine whole centuries for his mortal life. You may perhaps call him a great man as being the son of Enoch; and inasmuch as he fills up the whole space between the first and the last inhabitant of the antediluvian world, we may fitly speak of that world's duration as the age of Methusaleh. When Noah began to build the ark Methusaleh was living and was 849 years old; Lamech also was living and was 662 years old. Doubtless they were both pious, and probably some of their descendants also. Some of Methusaleh's brethren and sisters likewise, whom Enoch bore after him, and educated as such a man must have educated his children, were in all probability the subjects of divine grace. Noah was not, therefore, entirely alone, not entirely destitute of christian sympathy and succor. His own father Lamech was alive until five years before the deluge, and his grandfather, Methusaleh, was living up to the very year that the deluge came. Nay, if he died a natural death, it could not have been more than a month, if so much, before the deluge. We do not know, indeed, that he did not perish in the deluge, but if not, then the funeral of Methusaleh must have been the very last thing that Noah attended. We go upon the supposition that Lamech and Methusaleh were both pious; and we do it principally because they had such pious sons. The thought is too dreadful for a moment to suppose that Methusaleh, that old, old man, remained among the ungodly scoffers of his grandson. We cling to the belief that he was a child of God, that he supported Noah by his counsels and his example; perhaps he assisted with his own hands in building

the ark; perhaps he lived to the very day when Noah entered into the ark, and blessed him, and took a solemn farewell of him, and then awaited, in holy resignation, his own end, giving himself up to God, even amidst the descending torrents, and seeking, to the last moment, to persuade others to repentance. I conceive that this is not at all improbable;—that he, and what few others of God's people may have been living to the last, would solemnly gather together in prayer and supplication, on the day when the foundations of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, awaiting in that posture, the consummation of the will of Jehovah. And if so, they doubtless prayed for Noah and his family, and thus the breath of prayer from the antediluvian world, even on the eve of its destruction, may have mingled with Noah's own supplications to bear the ark in safety over the waste of waters.

It was a solemn night for Noah and the world. It was a solemn night for the aged Methusaleh and other believing relatives; but how much more so for the unbelieving and ungodly; their last night before the storm of vengeance.

In dwelling upon this interesting text, I shall first take a simple survey of the age and manners of the antediluvian world; and second, I shall draw some important lessons from such a survey.

I. As to the age and manners of the antediluvian world. The youth of the world was the season of man's greatest age; perhaps also it was the season of man's greatest wickedness. Three things we know with certainty, amidst all the darkness that hangs over the life of the antediluvians; they lived to a great age, they rose to a great height of depravity, and except Enoch, they all died. The assurance of a very long life would be to any man either a great temptation to sin, or a great means of holiness; most likely the former. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* The character written for our instruction of the race of man in the world before the flood, *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,* corresponds unerringly with the inspired declaration by the mouth of Solomon. The sentence of death deferred for so many ages, was almost unknown, and came at length to be utterly discredited; they thought not of it; nay, so hardy and secure had long centuries of vigorous existence made them, that, as long as Adam lived, they might have dreamed of indefinite centuries yet to come, the limit of man's life, in all probability, not having been made the subject of precise revelation. For more than seven antideluvian generations no death is recorded in the scriptures. There may have been mortal diseases, and even the crime of Cain may have been not unfrequently repeated, for *the earth was filled with violence.*

But, for aught we know, the funeral of Adam was the first which his posterity attended for nearly a thousand years. There was, indeed, another funeral; the murdered Abel was buried; but the parents were the only mourners. With his own hands Adam dug the grave of his

youngest, best beloved son; with his own hands he buried him; and Eve planted the sacred inclosure with flowers, and watered it with her tears. The simplest things were then matters of revelation; death and its consequences were so little known, that the angels would have to show Adam what he must do with the bleeding corpse of Abel; the language of Abraham, *bury my dead out of my sight*, could only spring from experience; for if death left the bodies of those we love as uncorrupted and as beautiful as life, we should wish to keep them by us, though inanimate and lifeless. The ancient Egyptians had a strange custom of doing this, as it was. They sometimes kept the dead bodies of their friends standing upright in their houses, embalmed so carefully, that every feature remained as it was in life; they kept them, Diodorus tells us, "in costly habitations, for the pleasure of beholding them for ever."

When Methusaleh was born, Adam was six hundred and eighty seven years of age. When Adam died Methusaleh was two hundred and eighty two. The oldest man lived in the society of the first man 282 years. Methusaleh was the grandfather of Noah; and when Noah was born, Methusaleh was 369 years old. Methusaleh and Noah were therefore contemporaries during the long space of 600 years. Noah had never seen Adam; the father of the second race of mortals had never seen the father of the first. But Lamech, Noah's father, and the first born of Methusaleh, had lived while Adam was yet alive, 95 years; and he, as well as Methusaleh, could describe to Noah, from personal knowledge and recollection, the teachings and the venerable grandeur of the Father of them all.

We cannot tell how many of the posterity of Seth were men of piety; we may hope that at least this was the case with the first born, whose names are recorded in the scriptures. The generations so recorded are the first born of the first born: in that line came Enoch and Noah, the first translated without seeing death, and the second preserved amidst the universal deluge to be the second father of the world. Enoch was the father of Methusaleh, and was translated when his first born son was 300 years of age. Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God; and the period for Methusaleh's education was sufficiently long for both himself and his own son Lamech to be moulded by the piety of their translated progenitor. The character of Enoch is sufficient pledge that the education of Methusaleh would be that of a child of God. Perhaps it was to make up for the taking away of Enoch from the world so early that the son of Enoch was permitted to live in the world so long. As the father was translated that he should not see death, the son was left to a longer life than that of any other mortal; and the example of the father's piety was probably transmitted and continued in the piety of the son.

As to that numerous progeny of the antediluvians undistinguished by name in the scriptures, but embraced in the general appellation of sons and daughters (as it is stated of each successive patriarch that he lived after he had begotten his first born, some hundreds of years, and

begat sons and daughters) it seems probable that but too many of them from the earliest period had corrupted their way before God. They would naturally leave the parental roof, and go forth to make progress in the world, somewhat as in after time Esau did, while the first born remained in the house of his ancestors. Removed from the care and example of pious parents, they gradually became more and more degenerate, and, together with the posterity of Cain, filled the world with such wickedness, that it repented God that he had made man upon the earth. Perhaps by the communion of the sons of God with the daughters of men is represented the mixture of the pious race of Adam through Seth with the lovely race of females springing from the loins of Cain. Be this as it may, the world increased in depravity as it grew in population and in age; and when the Patriarch Noah commenced building the ark, it is probable there were few men living on the earth who feared God. His father Lamech, at the age of 777 years, was taken from the evil to come; and for a while Noah was left, perhaps, the only pious parent, and almost the only pious individual, in the world. Some of his sons at that period may have been converted in answer to the prayers of Noah, but we have reason to believe that the race of the people of God was limited to a very few persons; and except these, Noah had none to commune with, and had to rest for consolation and support, amidst the scoffs of an ungodly age, solely upon God.

The death of Adam took place just eighty-seven years before Noah's birth. Of the death of Eve no mention is made in the Scriptures. How long she remained on earth with our great father, by what angelic messengers or revelations from the Almighty they were both prepared for their departure, or what blessings and prophetic warnings they left with their posterity on leaving the world, we know not. Of all possible circumstances we have but one, and that the universal record of man, *he died.* Nor is the name of any woman of the posterity of Adam, from Seth to Noah, handed down to us, nor any glimpse of information as to the part which the wives of the antediluvian patriarchs might have played in the education of their children. Who was the mother of Methusaleh? and what the lessons taught him in his infancy? Was the help-meet of Enoch chosen for her piety? and did she walk, like him, with God? are questions which curiosity, pausing upon the life of the world before the flood, would be glad to have answered. But not a ray of information comes down to us, nor is even a loop-hole left for conjecture, save that the character of men like Enoch and Noah is sufficient ground for the supposition, that so far as their minds were left to be moulded by their mothers, the example set before them, and the influence exerted upon them, must have been holy.

And now, could we call up the shades of Methusaleh, and converse with the oldest man, what would be the lessons of his experience? Would they be greatly different from ours? Would the thoughts and feelings, the events and circumstances, of men whose life was of a

thousand years' duration, be very diverse from those of ordinary mortals, whose span is only threescore years and ten, or would one little limit of existence vary from theirs only as a miniature does from a portrait, where the features, the passions, the expression, are the same, and only the dimensions of the canvass, the size of the painting are different? The temptations of Methusaleh must have been like ours; his christian conflict was the same; his faith was the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But were his trials as heavy as ours, or has the primeval curse gathered a strength in the progress of six thousand years not known in the world's infancy? What indeed was affliction, disease, old age, with the antediluvians? Were their trials spread over a larger portion of existence than ours? Did colds and fevers rack the body with pain for a time proportionally longer? Ere the close of life did the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they were few, and were those that looked out of the windows darkened? Was their infancy extended into our childhood, and their childhood into our manhood, so that their youth was our age, and the child died being an hundred years old? Was the flight of time with them as rapid as with us, and notwithstanding their long life, did they leave it with as strong unwillingness, with as deep regret, with as many plans incomplete, and purposes betrayed, as we do ours? The unerring truth of Scripture has made one thing certain; that, as they grew in years they grew in wickedness, despising the goodness of God, and filling up life with impiety, till all flesh had corrupted their way, and become fitted only for the destruction of the deluge. Their passions were the same as ours, and they gave them their full swing of indulgence; and in the long sweep of nine hundred years they must have gathered a prodigious power, and raged and burned like a volcano. It is surprising that with so much wickedness they should have lived so long. It is not surprising, under such circumstances, that when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, so few, if any, should have listened to the warnings of the preacher of righteousness. It might have been expected, at least, it might have been hoped, of those in early life; but what *could* have been expected of men who had lived eight or nine hundred years in the unrestrained gratification of every evil propensity? *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?* Then may those who have been accustomed to do evil learn to do well. There was no alternative but their destruction.

II. We may reduce the lessons to be gathered from this survey under several specifications.

1. We may learn an appalling lesson as to the agglomerative tendencies of human depravity. In order to people the earth speedily, it was necessary that the life of the antediluvians should be extended over a period more than twelve times the limit of human existence afterwards assigned in the Scriptures. It was also requisite for a full and fair experiment of human nature, and afforded scope and oppor-

tunity for the most rapid growth in knowledge and goodness. The example and instructions of Adam were continued nearly a thousand years; and with him for their teacher and priest, together with all the successive acquisitions of his numerous posterity accumulating contemporaneously for their use, had they been disposed to goodness, they might well nigh have retrieved the ruins of the fall, redeeming earth from its primeval curse by the holiness of its inhabitants. But the experiment resulted so miserably, that the destruction of the whole race proved necessary. Had it been much longer continued, the wickedness of human beings, in combination with the increase of their numbers, would have made earth well nigh a hell in all respects but its penal inflictions. Instead of growing better, they grew worse with every score of years added to their existence, and filled society with crime, which made it a fellowship of guilt through all its ramifications.

Now here is a lesson in human experience, which one would think might silence forever the advocates of the theory of human perfectibility. The race of antediluvians were blessed with all possible capacities and facilities for indefinite improvement in knowledge and happiness. Their age was not a mere hand's breadth, but the full deep circle of nine centuries. They were not called to die when they had just begun to live, nor to quit their investigations forever, when they had just learned how to study. Men's minds might have been formed and disciplined in the revolution of nine hundred years under an accumulation of influences and circumstances in the highest degree powerful and favorable. What would we give, what might not we become, if only a seventy years' experience could be carried into seventy years more of life, health, and vigor! What might not be done, if a Newton, instead of leaving merely the results of his own labors in books, could have continued his investigations personally, with the full powers of his mind, seventy years longer, and seventy more after that, having all the while gathered in through the whole period, along with his own thoughts, the thoughts of other minds, and the cumulative wisdom of contemporary ages! But the antediluvians might do this, not for one threescore years and ten merely, but for twelve times that period. They could form vast designs without fear of interruption. A plan that needed a hundred years for its execution, was only the work of childhood to a man assured of life nine times as long. Then too they were all of one speech; they possessed one universal language, the immediate gift of God. They had teachers who had seen and talked with God; the father and mother of the human race were with them. They were strong in body, and noble in stature and in mind. The mixture of the sons of God with the fairest of earth's daughters, was in their composition; a proud, renowned race, eminent in shape and gesture, and with intellectual faculties probably quite as gigantic as their size. They might have grown to a knowledge of God, and a height of moral loveliness, which might almost have evaded the sentence of mortality, and caused the translation of the

whole race, like that of Enoch. A ladder was let down to them from heaven; but instead of rising thither, they employed every endowment of being, and every capability of life for growth in wickedness, and corrupted themselves to such a height before God, that their sufferance on the earth was no longer possible. So much for human perfectibility! Such is fallen, wretched, graceless, human nature!

2. I have spoken of the darkness that hangs over the life of the antediluvians. The extreme conciseness and paucity of detail in the sacred history concerning them are remarkable. We may draw from it a salutary lesson. Their space in the world's existence amounted almost to one-third of its whole being thus far; for, of the sixty centuries that have nearly elapsed, from creation's dawn to the present moment, their busy transit occupied not much less than two thousand years; and of the four thousand years over which the Bible ranges its sacred perspective, the wickedness of the antediluvians consumed almost half; and yet not a two hundredth part of the inspiration of the Scriptures is conceded to their notice. If they themselves could have drawn up for future times even an abridgment of all that they expected to be known, and thought worthy to be known in regard to them, the history of the world before the flood, would have occupied more space than that of all ages since; and we should have had an antediluvian Bible, emblazoned all over with the record of their glorious achievements; and doubtless it would have been a most striking, a most extraordinary history. All elements of human greatness, as well as of human wickedness, would have entered into its composition; for there can scarcely be a doubt that the intellectual faculties of men wrought on a scale as gigantic as their passions, so that, by the time the flood came, the earth must have been covered with memorials of most surpassing grandeur. The very first born of Adam, the murderer of his brother, when the volcano of passion had a little burned out, and he had somewhat recovered from the tempest of madness and remorse of conscience, *builded a city*, impressing upon its stupendous architecture all the energy of a mind of gigantic strength, and instead of giving it a name that might have connected it sacredly with heaven, indulged a mixture of paternal fondness and ambition, and called it after the name of his first born son. But of all the grandeur that might have grown in time to be characteristic of the first city, and of all the countless temples and palaces whelmed beneath the deluge, not a vestige was preserved for after admiration, even in description; and of all monuments of genius, in history, poetry, biography, or whatever other shape the mind of antediluvian antiquity might choose for its creations, though there may have been libraries larger than that of all the Ptolemies, it is doubtful if Noah deigned to take one solitary leaf into the ark, to be preserved amidst the waste of waters. Over all achievements of fame, all wonders of genius, all events of history, in which the actors anticipated an immortality of glory, the pen of inspiration draws a blank; it is a parcel of insignificant rubbish; it is like the chaos of an unformed world; it

is all passed over in forgetfulness, and the record of their life is comprehended in the merest affirmation of mortality—*he died.*

Only one event is recorded alike of them all, no matter what may have been their situation in life, whether princes of the earth, surrounded with grandeur, or beggars in rags upon the dunghill. They may have amassed wealth beyond the possibility of computation, they may have enlarged the bounds of science, and filled the world with the fame of their discoveries, they may have traveled into distant lands, and brought back volumes of knowledge, they may have possessed an eloquence like that of angels, they may have written poetry worthy the abodes of Paradise, they may have founded empires, and given systems of law to communities, they may have been poets, orators, statesmen, philosophers, they may have done all that makes the name of mortals great, they have been the Homers, the Virgils, the Newtons, the Bacons, the Shakspeares, the Miltons of their age;—but with all this, the history of their life is reduced down to the bald, unvaried epitaph, *he died.* There would be all varieties of existence among them as among us; some whose rank and connexions in life would place them at the summit of society, and others whose powers of conversation made them the admired in every circle, and others whose days were crowded with events of wonder, and others whose domestic relations were full of beauty and of tenderness, and others of a glowing imagination, and others of a vast reach of mind, and others of angelic symmetry and strength of body;—and yet it is all annihilated in that one simple record, *he died.*

There would be, in the progress of antediluvian existence, all materials that ever combine to raise the record of a man's days from obscurity and insignificance, all that we ever look upon as constituting fit stuff for the tissue of a magnificent history, or a grand and glowing biography; they must have attained all that in the world's view is worth living for; they must have accomplished all, that in the eye of ambition constitutes a ground for that immortality of fame, which the fallen mind thirsts after; actions to draw a world's applause, inventions and discoveries of surprising ingenuity, systems of science and philosophy, all forms of greatness realized;—and yet it is all disposed of and confined within the annals of two words, *he died.*

Once in the flight of ages past,
There lived a man:—and who was he?
—Mortal! howe'er thy lot be cast,
That man resembled thee.

He saw whatever thou hast seen,
Encountered all that troubles thee;
He was—whatever thou hast been,
He is—what thou shalt be.

The annals of the human race,
Their ruins since the world began,
Of him afford no other trace
Than this,—THERE DIED A MAN.

Now it is scarcely possible to read a more affecting and instructive lesson than the Holy Spirit has thus transmitted for our consideration, as to the worthlessness of all mere mortal grandeur in the eye of God. The pleasure, wealth, power, knowledge, glory, of ten centuries crowded into one life, with all the changes and shows of a human existence, continued through a period which with us suffices for the transit of nearly thirty generations, are just as unnoticed as if they had never had an existence. Except so far as these things bear upon our eternal destiny, (the point which with most men is left as utterly out of consideration as if there were no eternal destiny,) it is absolutely regarded as of no account whatever, whether a man were poor or rich, learned or unlearned, lofty or lowly, wise or ignorant, whether he were a Newton or a Hottentot, a Milton or a chimney-sweep, a Bacon or the inmate of a mad-house, an Alexander or a beggar in the street. Considered apart from the fact of his probationary state, the enjoyments or events in the life of the most distinguished of mortals, though it were protracted to a period beyond that of the oldest antediluvian, are absolutely of no more importance, in comparison with the idea of an endless duration, than the movements of a new-born babe the first day of its existence. You might compress the possession of all the royalty and luxury of all the monarchs of the earth, and all the glory of the whole world's warriors, statesmen and nobility, and all the wisdom and fame of all the world's poets and philosophers, into the experience of one mind, and the period of one life, and yet, in itself, and for itself, without reference to God, it is nothing, absolutely not worth naming; considered with reference to eternity, it dwindles to a point; with reference to happiness, it is gone like the ticking of a clock, and is of no more value than the pulsations in the veins of the smallest microscopic insect. The only thing of absolute value is that which connects us with God, and makes us partakers of his holiness; all things else are baubles. Crowns are playthings, dukedoms and dominions of no more importance than the grains of sand that go to make up an ant hill.

3. The consideration of the great age of the antediluvians, and its effect upon their state on earth, might lead to some faint conception of what an Apostle calls the power of an endless life.

It may do this in two ways;—first, the power of such a life for the increase of holiness;—second, in the progressive accumulation of depravity. Enoch lived 365 years; as many years as there are days in the year; an existence beyond the period of three centuries and a half;—and by the faithful improvement of his privileges through the grace of God during this short period, short in comparison with the ordinary antediluvian age, though long in comparison with our age, for a saint's earthly walk with God, he became so holy, that in the strikingly simple and energetic language of the scriptures, *God took him.* He passed into God's immediate and blissful presence, without passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death. He became so holy, that perhaps death was not needed to set the final seal of perfect pur-

ty upon his immortal spirit. But if this were the case in a world of sin, temptation and opposition to holiness, what will be the rapidity of his increasing resemblance to God by *the power of an endless life*, in that world where God, in the infinite perfection of his attributes, is all in all; where every hindrance is removed, and a progression takes place that knows no limits, can never diminish, can have no end.

On the other hand, the whole race of antediluvians who lived in wickedness, became so wicked in the progress of less than a thousand years, that it was absolutely necessary for God to destroy them. This was in a state of probation, a limited period of human existence. But, if, in the space of nine centuries, men will become so depraved on earth, even amidst all restraints and inducements to the contrary, all mercies received, punishments forborne, and obligations of gratitude daily incurring, so depraved that creation must be eased of its burthen by the destruction of the race, what will that depravity be, when its increase goes on in the bosom of eternity, unrestricted, unalleviated, uncombined? The human mind is not adequate fully to form or entertain the dread conception. Change time into eternity, remove restraint, and let despair take the place of hope, and you have simply human wickedness, endlessly progressive, without accompanying pleasure. In every age the wickedness of man needs only eternity to act in, and it constitutes hell.

4. We are all naturally as wicked as the race of mankind destroyed by the deluge. The great wickedness of the antediluvians was principally owing to the multiplication of their years; it was probably no greater than we ourselves should arrive at, if our life were as long as theirs. It is remarkable how scripture answers to scripture in regard to the character of man. "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets*," said our Lord, through the mouth of Abraham, "*neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*" We are apt to think that in such or such circumstances, if we had been situated in the place of other men, we should have done very differently. The Jews said so, and perhaps thought so, in regard to the persecution of the prophets, when they were themselves contriving the crucifixion of the Savior; if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. We think it strange that in the very presence of Adam, with one for their teacher that had seen God, with those before them who had walked and talked with angels, had been driven out from Paradise on account of sin, and from personal experience, as well as by the spirit of God, could warn their whole posterity like immediate messengers from heaven, the race of man should become so universally and deeply wicked. It argues great depravity, doubtless, but no greater than that which made the Jews idolaters at the foot of Sinai, no greater than that revealed by the crucifixion of the Messiah, and certainly no greater than that which leads multitudes now, in defiance of God's word, an enlightened conscience, a preached gospel, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit, to persist in the indulgence of their sins, and rush down to per-

dition. And doubtless it will be more tolerable for the antediluvian world at the Day of Judgment, than for that world of the ungodly, who, under the preaching of the gospel, reject the Savior from their hearts, and die impenitent.

5. The mere duration of years does not constitute a long life, but the fulfilment of life's purposes. *Hoc est vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.* It was some distinction to have been the oldest man; it would have been a greater distinction still to have been the wisest man; but a greater than all to have been the holiest man. It is only a well spent life that can be enjoyed over again in the recollection. When Enoch was translated, he had lived longer in living to God, than the whole antediluvian race put together, who lived only for their own pleasure. And so, if Methusaleh had lived but one year like his father, *having this testimony, that he pleased God,* that little year would have been longer, than all the other nine hundred and sixty-eight years of his life united. No man lives long, who does not live to God's glory; but he who does that, LIVES ETERNALLY. When it is said of such a one *he died,* it means he began to live. It is true, that the christian then begins life, when the will of God lives in him; but he does never realize the full blessedness and power of that existence, till his soul, unfettered by the body, and no more measuring time by mortal years, has winged its flight where time, and sense, and sin, are known no longer. And so, when a man leaves the world impenitent, he only begins to die; entering upon an eternal existence of positive death. He knows not what death is, till his soul is driven from the body, and has the wages of sin paid to it. He began to die, indeed, to God and all goodness, when he first began to sin; but the completion of that death, the conversion of life into death, and the full realization of its misery, do not commence, till the experience, in eternity, of wickedness without pleasure, duration without time, justice without mercy.

6. There was a time in the life of every ungodly antediluvian, in which his wickedness had reached such a point, his long habits of sin had gained such strength, that all hope of his salvation departed. At such a moment, though long before the close of his mortal career, it might have been said with awful emphasis, *he died.* It is not probable that there ever was a single death-bed repentance in the world before the flood; for when the passions of men had flowed nine hundred years in a course of rebellion against God, though a man rose from the dead, or an angel stood by the bed-side, it would have had no effect over the departing spirit.

There is probably such a time in the life of every ungodly individual now; a time when man's evil habits have become so confirmed, and his heart so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that it is morally impossible he should ever after be converted. The lateness, or the comparative earliness of such a period, depends, doubtless, upon the opportunities of salvation already rejected, the influences of the spirit of God resisted, the revivals of religion passed through untouched, the dealings of God's providence disregarded, and a multitude of circum-

stances, of which none but an omniscient Being can be supposed to have cognizance. But if that period were known in heaven, as we have reason to think the repentance of returning prodigals is known, with what compassionate intensity of interest would it be viewed by those ranks of spiritual spectators. The angels, for example, who are watching on errands of mercy in the assemblies of God's people, as they hover over the congregation, and witness the indifference of some, the carelessness of others, the dread insensibility of others, with what awe and mournful shuddering would they mark the plague spot on the soul! Methinks we might almost hear them whispering to each other, as they collect in solemn sadness around such an individual, Our business here is ended: he is dead. And if the awful fact were made legible to others, by some appropriate mark upon the forehead, some brand of spiritual death upon the features, like that which designated Cain, to the fearful gaze of society, what a spectacle would our congregations exhibit!

7. Our subject teaches the danger of religious procrastination. At the beginning of the year, to which God in his mercy has spared us, this lesson comes with unusual solemnity. The habit of procrastination would be dreadfully dangerous, even if life were lengthened out to the farthest period of antediluvian existence; its indulgence would harden a man's heart, and carry him, long before the day of his death, beyond the confines of his day of grace. I believe that the older a man grows, the less he expects to die, and consequently, the more unwilling he is to prepare for death. This is prodigiously strange and absurd. Certainly, every new year that a man commences, there is a greater probability that in the course of it he will die, than there has been in any previous year of his existence. John Foster has pursued this thought in one of his sermons, in so striking a manner, that I shall apply a part of his language in its enforcement here. Let a man know that a thing which he is to find is in one of a hundred places, if he looks into ten or twenty, and finds it not there, he certainly has a greater probability of finding it in the next than in any former one, because the number is so much less of those in which it may be found. If any event will certainly take place in a hundred days, as one day after another passes away, and it does *not* take place, there is the greater probability that it will take place in the next. If a person has passed through ninety days, it will be deeply impressed that the next will be the one. Now apply this to life. We know there is one extraordinary event that we are to meet; it is in the number of our days; it must happen soon, it may happen any day; and the more time there has already passed away, the more probably the next day or hour will be the time.

The time must come when we shall meet our God, shall quit these wonted scenes, this earthly tabernacle, shall close this succession of terrestrial days and common events in our existence, and enter an unseen world. The time must come. A great many days in our appointed existence have already passed by, and we have not yet found

the great uncommon event, that is to change our days into eternity. More days have passed with us, than with a great many persons who have already met that event, and been taken from us. They have found it in fewer days than we. This makes it more probable still that we are close upon it. The next place we look in, we may find it. All the days between us and the great day are removing out of the way; as in a journey, the hill once before the traveler, is put behind him; the villages between him and the capital are taken from anticipation and put in retrospection, and every hour he is some miles nearer. So rapidly and certainly we are coming to the day of death.

Now it is a solemn question for some of those who hear me, (it is for us all, but especially for those who have no portion in God.) Does your approach to that day make you feel more sensibly its nearness? As you stand in the opening of a New Year, your eager foot just crossing its first step, is the idea of death, as more probable for you this year than the last, one of the images before your mind, or does the King of Terrors appear to be retreating in the distance? Do you find that the distractions of the world, and the love of its pleasures, and the allurements of sin, lose any of their power as you grow older, and overtake, one after another, the different periods to which you have, from time to time, put off a preparation for eternity? Are you not more fertile in suggesting excuses, and more ingenious in expedients to stifle your conscience, and to blind your soul's moral vision, than you ever were before in any period of your life? Does not your disposition to procrastinate increase in its paralyzing power, with every day in which you continue to indulge it, while at the same time a thicker mist of insensibility envelopes your feelings at every new interval, in which you cast your thoughts over the prospect in eternity? And does not every successive movement of your soul towards its eternal destination, restrict its vision more entirely to the world you are leaving, and cast into more alarming indistinctness the world you are entering? Oh, be wise, and arrest in your own soul the progress of this mighty evil, and to-day cast yourself as a penitent sinner at the foot of the cross, and in Jesus Christ be reconciled to God.

We should feel the value of our days, not so much by the rapidity with which they are passing, though that is a solemn consideration, as by what they are doing for us, what they are laying up in store before us. They are so many rapid messengers, whom we send into eternity beforehand; and we are to meet our days again; we do not, cannot annihilate them. We have only sent them before us, to prepare us a mansion in heaven, or to make us a bed in hell. We shall meet them in eternity, for time is eternal, and even now is waiting in eternity to bear its testimony in regard to us. O, how solemn is this thought! The soul of time, if I may so speak, travels with our souls into eternity.

> **Now! It is gone. Our brief hours travel post,**
> **Each with its thought or deed, its why or how:—**
> **But know each parting hour gives up a ghost,**
> **To dwell within thee, AN ETERNAL NOW!**

Dear friends, what report shall the hours of this year, which even now have begun their rapid flight, bear from us and for us into the eternal world? Surely we ought all to say with Hezekiah, spared to begin a new year, "I will walk softly before God all my days." May God help us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; so to number our days, that now, henceforward, according to that common, but most meaning phrase, we may, by divine grace, spend them all *as we shall wish we had done when we come to die.*

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SERMON CCCXLI.

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THE GREAT SEPARATION.

"I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."—Mat. x. 35.

The subject which is suggested by these words, is, the great separation which religion makes in families. The Savior, in the text, simply states a fact. He does not say that he *aimed* at such a separation; or that it was in itself desirable; or that religion would be responsible for it; or that there would be no possibility of avoiding it: he states the fact simply as it would occur—evidently in his view a lamentable fact, and one that would be attended sooner or later with unhappy results. The union of families is desirable. It is such an object as the "Prince of peace" would seek. But the meaning of the Savior in the text is, that his religion, by calling out one part of a family from another, would in fact tend to divide them, and would be the innocent cause of alienation. "I am come," said he, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Endeavoring to keep the spirit of these words in view, and to pursue such a line of thought as shall best illustrate them, I shall invite your attention to two points.

I. The union of families in religion is desirable. And,

II. Religion in fact often separates them.

I. The union of families in religion is desirable; or, in other words, it is desirable that a family should be all united in the same faith, and in the same hope of heaven.

Before suggesting the reasons for this—which indeed appear obvious almost without argument or illustration—I would observe, that in other subjects than religion, separations often occur in a family which create no evil, and which are in fact unavoidable. They are such as

relate to the professions and callings in life, the daily avocations in the domestic circle, or the separation of a family when children advance to years of maturity. There is often much *painfulness* attending such separations, but there is no blame, and no injury is done to individual interests, or to society at large. In the distinct departments of labor pursued by the husband and wife; in the different professions which the father and his sons may follow; in the separations which occur when one is a merchant, another a physician, another a lawyer, a fourth a clergyman, a farmer, or a mariner, no injury is done; no alienation of feeling of necessity occurs. The great interests of society are not endangered; nor need the harmony of a family be disturbed, for its affairs move on like machinery where every wheel has its place, and where the revolution of one promotes the beautiful action of the whole.

If religion were something of this description, and affected no more vital interests than these different callings, the same thing might occur in regard to it, and no more injury would follow were one member of a family a christian, another an atheist, another a scoffer; were one member to delight in prayer, and another to disregard it; one to love the bible, and another to regard it as a cheat and an imposture. What is there in religion, it may be asked, which makes it so much more desirable that the members of a family should be united in that than in their professional pursuits? What is there that makes separation a subject of special regret? I shall submit a few considerations which are so obvious that they will probably at once occur to your own minds; at any rate they will commend themselves to you as true. They are these.

1. Union in a family on the subject of religion is desirable, because all its members have the same interests at stake. It is not here as it is in regard to worldly matters. The same great object, substantially, may be obtained in a family in worldly matters, in separate callings in life. Happiness, health, property, respectability, may be secured though one be a farmer, another a merchant, another a mechanic, another connected with one of the liberal professions. Indeed, so nicely is this adjusted and balanced by the Great Disposer of events, that it is to this day a question with every young man still undecided, though the experiment has been made some thousands of years, which of these callings furnish the most favorable field for the attainment of these objects. Either of them is still open as an ample and an honorable department where the great objects sought in the present life may be gained. But no such remark can be made in reference to the differences in religion. Neither reason, experience, nor the Bible, furnish any evidence that the same things in regard to man's immortal welfare can be obtained where there are radically different views in religion, or that the christian, the impenitent sinner, the infidel, the scoffer, and the atheist, though in the same family, can equally secure the favor of God. The history of the world has furnished impressive lessons on these points, and the Bible abundantly confirms all that that history has taught.

In reference to religion, all the members of a family have substantially the same interests at stake. The soul of one is of the same value as that of another, and is to be saved, if saved at all, in the same way. Each one has been redeemed by the same blood; and each one is advancing to the same judgment-bar. Pardon, needed equally by all, is to be obtained by each in the same manner; and being obtained will confer the same peace on all. In a family there is no reason why the wife should be a christian and the husband not; why the father or the mother should be the friend of the Savior, and the son or daughter not; or why the sister should seek her happiness in the hope of heaven, and the brother feel that he has resources which can compensate for this, though he is not a christian. Neither the husband, the son, the daughter, nor the brother, can secure the salvation of the soul without religion, any more than the wife, the father, the mother, or the sister. As they have the same great *interests* at stake, it is desirable that they should be united in religion.

2. It is desirable because they are all under substantially the same obligation. That obligation may be slightly varied by age, or capacity, or the relation sustained, but it rests substantially on all. There is no special obligation which binds a wife to love God which does not rest also on the husband; there is none which claims the affection of a sister which does not also demand the heart of a brother; there is none which is laid upon the child which is not also upon the parent. Of the husband, whose wife is a christian, no one can show, that God has exempted him from the duty to which she responds; of the parent who has sons or daughters in the church, no one can show that he is exempt from the duty which they feel resting on them. If one is bound to love God, so is the other; if the father, so is the son; if the mother, so is the daughter; if the daughter-in-law, so is the mother-in-law. The claim is the same, and for the same reason. It rests on the broad basis of the duty which all men owe to their Maker, and so far as *obligation* is concerned, it is desirable that a family should be united in religion.

3. Such union is desirable in order to promote the happiness of a family; for religion enters more deeply into the things that promote or mar domestic enjoyment than anything else. Other differences, as has already been intimated, do not necessarily produce a jar, or lead either to alienation or to anxiety. A son may be a merchant or a lawyer while the father is a farmer, and the separation shall produce no alienation, and cause no regret or solicitude. All the wishes of the father's heart may be gratified in his virtuous life, and in the honor which a son of rising worth and reputation shall reflect on the family. But this cannot occur in religion. A christian father can never have such feelings in the contemplation of the fact that his son is an infidel, or a mere neglector of religion. All the father's hopes are identified with his religion, and all his expectations that his children will ever be happy are identified with that also; and when there is not reason for that hope in regard to the child, there

must be anxiety in proportion to the sense which the parent has of the value and importance of religion. Accordingly it is a fact with which every one is familiar, that there is nothing that enters so deeply into the happiness of a family as unity of religious views, and of course nothing that will so much mar the peace of a family as discord on this subject. So important has this been usually regarded, that it has been felt that every sacrifice, but that of conscience, should be made to secure this union, and that in the case of a husband and wife attached to different denominations, one of them should be willing to sacrifice the preference, if it can be done with a good conscience, that they may "walk to the house of God in company."

Besides. Religion is as needful to the happiness of one member of a family as another. If it has a good effect on the temper of a wife, it would also have on that of the husband. If it sustains one in times of trial, it would also the other. If it enables one to meet the rebuffs of adverse fortune with a calm spirit, it would enable the other to do it also. If it makes one serene and cheerful in the prospect of approaching death, or when a child is laid in the grave, what shall forbid us to suppose that it would minister the same consolation to the other also?

4. In like manner, unity in religion in a family is desirable to promote the happiness of those who *are* christians. In most of the families that compose the congregations associated for public worship, there is one or more who is a sincere christian. The happiness of such is in religion. Their most intense and ardent aspirations are for heaven—for themselves, and for their friends. Their feelings of solicitude in behalf of their families are indeed often unknown to others. They are sometimes—often, I believe—criminally negligent in making them known; but there are often difficulties in the way which they cannot overcome. It is not easy for a daughter, who has the most intense solicitude for the salvation of a father, to express that desire to *him;* and there *may be* cases where if a wife were to express the wishes of her heart to her husband, she may be certain that it would be met with a sneer, a witticism, a rebuke, or with most withering indifference. Even a mother may have so frequently pressed the subject on the attention of her sons, and may have so exhausted all the sources of appeal at her command, that she may have become disheartened, and feel almost the effort would be vain. Yet though silent, the solicitude of the wife and the mother is not extinguished. It may no longer be manifest as it once was to the husband or the son. It is now poured forth in the closet; and the appeal is transferred from their closed ears and hardened hearts to an ear that is never closed, a heart that never ceases to feel. Now if a child desired to pour into the bosom of a tender parent the purest, sweetest, most enduring joy, he would become a christian. If a husband so loved the partner of his bosom as to desire to promote her happiness in the highest degree, he would become a christian. For there is nothing else that will make a family so blessed; no increase of wine or oil will diffuse such deep-felt and permanent bliss around the fireside.

5. Unity in religion in a family is desirable, in order to give consolation in times of affliction. Nothing is more common than the breaking up of a family circle. No securities that we can throw around our domestic comforts, can save them from the entrance of sickness and death. The ranks of all families will be broken. Death comes. A husband, a father, a mother, a child is removed, and the survivors go forth and weep together. They have common sorrows. There is no jar, no discord there. The same chord has been struck in each heart, and the tones of its vibration are deep and long. In their affection for the departed, and in their sorrows, there is entire harmony of feeling. But not so in their consolations. One heart acquiesces in God, even in the unsearchable mysteries of his dealings, and feels that all is right. That heart is calm, and rests on the unfailing promises. The eye of that weeper looks up through tears to heaven, and the Father of mercies regards the desire of the suppliant, and gives peace. But not so with all. Another heart may have no consolation. It may be full of murmuring, and repining, and rebellion. There is no submission, and no looking to God. Nothing is seen by the eye of this one but clouds and darkness. Not a ray penetrates the gloom; not even momentary respite and consolation visits the soul. Now religion would have made all that weeping circle calm and submissive. It would have met their common sorrows by common joys, and though afflicted here together, yet they could have looked forward to a world where they would rejoice together, where all tears shall be wiped from every face.

6. Once more. Unity in religion in a family is desirable, in order to promote the eternal welfare of all. There is no reason to believe that one can be saved in one way and another in another. There is but one path that leads to heaven, and that is a "straight and narrow" one. It accords not with reason any more than it does with the Bible, to suppose that one can be saved by christian piety, and another by infidelity; that faith will conduct one to the skies, and the want of it another; that he who prays has a well founded hope of glory, and that he has the same ground of hope who does not pray; that the righteousness of the Redeemer is the robe by which one is to be clothed in heaven, and that the morality of another is to constitute the "white garment" in which he will appear on the banks of the river of life; that one is to be borne up to receive the crown, ransomed by the blood of Jesus, and with the song of salvation on his lips as he ascends, and that another, who is a reviler, and a scoffer, and a blasphemer, is to ascend to the same world of glory, borne on the wings of imprecations and curses. Not thus do men ascend to the skies. If anything is clear from the Bible, and from all the deductions of reason, it is, that they who have different characters in this world must meet a different doom in the next, and that this great principle *cannot* be set aside by all the tenderness of ties in the domestic relation. The mere fact that we are united there in love, and interest; that the most tender of all chords bind the heart of a christian father even to an impenitent

child, cannot, and should not, abrogate the great law by which God purposes to save men; and unless to every other tie there be added the "unity of the faith" and "the bond of christian peace," there cannot be hope of unity in heaven. Yet I need not say one word to show how desirable it is that an entire family should be prepared to enter into heaven. Is there any one of our children on whom we can look but with overwhelming emotions of horror with the anticipation that he will be at the left hand of the Judge, and is to "dwell with devouring fire" for ever? Christian fathers, mothers, ye who hope in the mercy of the Lord, the affairs of this world are *trifles light as air* when this thought enters the soul. What think ye of the gaiety and vanity, of the worldliness and want of religion, of the neglect of prayer in your closets and in your families, which may be the means of separating a child from your side at the bar of God; which may unclinch your hand from the hand of a son there; which may sunder the embrace of mother and daughter there for ever, that the daughter and the son may "go away into everlasting punishment"?

II. My second object was to show that religion does in fact make a separation in families. You will not suppose that I design to attempt to *prove* this. The fact is too apparent to make an attempt at demonstration proper. I design, under this head, merely to suggest some of the circumstances where religion makes such a separation.

1. It divides families at the communion table. There are, indeed, in our congregations, perhaps generally, some three or four families all of whose members are communicants in the church, and there are about as many not one of whose members is a professed friend of Christ. But the body of communicants in the churches is made up of *divided families;* not divided in the sense of alienation, and jealousies, and heart-burnings; not divided it may be, unless in quite rare instances, in the sense that any portion of the families is sceptical or profane. But they are divided in a more important sense than any mere temporary estrangement would be, or any alienation founded on a reference to worldly concerns. It is a division *that has reference to religion;* where the welfare of the soul is at stake, and which bears upon vital and eternal interests.

Now, I will not say that in all cases it is true religion which makes this separation at the communion table. I will not venture to affirm that *all* who come to the Lord's Supper in the churches are true christians; nor will I say that all who do not have no evidence of piety. On these points my subject requires me to make no affirmation, and I would not dare to do it, for it is not given to man to search the heart. But there are two considerations which may without impropriety be suggested here, and which demand the attention of all who do not make a profession of religion.

(1.) The first is, that *so far as the evidence goes* in the observance of the Lord's Supper, it is, that *true religion* makes the difference

between those who commune and those who do not. The fact of coming to the communion-table, and of professing attachment to the Savior, is the *public* proof, or *prima facie* evidence, that they who do it are christians. I know, indeed, that the proof is not infallible; but *so far as it goes* it is proof, and is good evidence unless it can be rebutted by showing that the life proves that there is no true religion. To make a profession of religion is, and should be regarded, as in itself an expression of a desire to do the will of God, to give up the heart to the Savior, to lead a christian life, to be prepared for heaven. The profession has been also made in most cases after much anxious inquiry; after much examination of the heart and of the Bible; and after much prayer to be guided aright; and has about all the security that there can be that it is based on the possession of real piety. No selfish motive in our land is likely often to influence men to make the profession, for it is followed by no recompense of office or gain; and if there is deception, it is to be set down to the credit of the liability of human nature to deception, and to the difficulty of determining what the real state of the heart is, even after much examination.

(2.) The second thing is, that your neglecting or refusing to make a profession of religion, is a *public* proof of the same kind, and of the same force, that you are not christians. This may not, I admit, be infallible. There may be some recently converted who wisely and prudently defer the profession for the present, that they may examine and test their piety. There may be some who *should* have connected themselves with the people of God, but whose evidence of piety is not as clear as they desired and as they hope it will be. But my idea is this: that your refusing to make a profession of religion is evidence, *so far as it goes*, that you are not a christian: it is the *public proof* that you are not. It is naturally and properly so interpreted by your fellow men. It is the construction which they must, will, and do, put on it, and a construction which it is difficult to avoid, and perhaps which you do not *wish* them to avoid. Why may it not amount, in many cases, to full evidence—so full as to be the public proof in the day of judgment of the want of religion? Why should we, from mere blind charity, kind-hearted as it may be, ascribe to a man that which he does not *profess* to have? Why give him the credit of possessing love to God and to the Savior, and of being influenced by the principles of religion, when he makes no such profession himself? Does that charity which is so commended in the New Testament, require us to go *beyond* what a man himself professes, and to put an interpretation on his principles which he himself forbids? The natural and fair inferences in regard to a man are, that when he professes to have no religion, he has none; that when he voluntarily separates himself from his christian friends, he has no sympathy with them in their religion; that when he declines to obey a command of the Savior which is simple, plain, obvious, universal in its obligation, and easy to be complied with, there is no principle of religious obedience in his heart. As a general rule, I know not why we should not abide by this simple

principle, and why we should not regard those who *profess* to have no religion as having none—whatever we may think of those who do. This rule is certainly in accordance with the principles of the Savior. "He that is not with me is against me." "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." If these remarks be correct, then the truth of what I have stated is established, that, to a great extent, the division which is made at the communion-table is a division made by religion, and that the line which is run there is one of fearful portent in regard to the destiny in the future world.

2. There will be less doubt in regard to a second separation which religion makes in families. It is in reference to the grave. It requires the exercise of large charity to believe that all families in the tomb sleep there with the same prospect of future glory. They may occupy the same dark house, and be arranged side by side, close to each other as they were when living; or they may sleep in neighboring graves, and a small enclosure railed around with iron, or set thick with flowers —an enclosure smaller than the area of the house where they dwelt in the land of the living—may hold them in close connexion in the abodes of the dead. But what shall make us believe that they all sleep there with the same prospect of heaven? What is our evidence that religion has made no separations there? Our nature prompts us —and I know not that our religion forbids it—to a more tender and wider charity for the dead than for the living; but the widest charity that is consistent with the maintenance of *any* religious principle whatever, can very rarely discern the evidence that *all* the members of a family die in hope. Religion made a difference while living: it made a difference in their plans of life; in their principles of action; in their conversation and deportment; in times of temptation and affliction, and on the bed of death; and why does it not perpetuate that difference in the grave? Is there some magic virtue—some potent charm in being put into the same vault, the same coffin, or the same grave; in having the same solemn vestments, and in mingling with the same mother earth, to change the character or the destiny? Surely no one can pretend this; and what shall then hinder the conclusion that the division in the family which religion begins here, reaches down to the tomb? There might be much, could we see all, that would be melancholy in looking on a family burying-place besides what meets the eye. Of the smiling babe that was laid there, christian hope entertains no doubt that the soul is safe; of the christian father, mother, or child that sleeps there, there is as little doubt. But what is the doom of the others? Here faith and hope are speechless; and a double pall rests on their remains.

3. There is less doubt still in regard to a third separation which religion makes. If there is not absolute certainty in regard to the effect of religion in causing the division at the communion table; if there is still uncertainty of increasingly painful character in regard to the separation in the grave, there can be none of the agency of religion in the divisions of the day of judgment and of the future world.

Here there is no room for conjecture; none for doubt. If the line run at the communion table be not the true line; if we are deceived about the dead, and hope when there is no ground for hope, and fear when there was really no reason to fear, yet the line will be drawn at the judgment-bar with unerring accuracy. That line will be *so* drawn that the universe will see and approve the reason why it is done; *and it is a line which will be run wholly by religion.* On this point the Scriptures leave us no room to doubt; and the account in the Bible is one that wholly accords with our own reason, that it is *religion* that is to make the separation there. It will not be beauty or blood; not rank, station, or wealth; not bodily vigor, learning, or accomplishments; not age, or fame. These things do not trace lines on the human character or destiny that continue beyond the grave. They are obliterated before the earth is made smooth over the graves of the prince and the peasant; or before the surface of the sea becomes calm when beauty, and rank, and youth, are engulfed beneath,—when,

> "Like a drop of rain,
> Man sinks into the depths with bubbling groan,
> Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

But religion *makes* a separation at the judgment—makes THE GREAT SEPARATION FOREVER. It makes a division there in such a manner that there shall be no future union. It places at the one hand of the Judge a father, and at the other a son; at the one hand a mother, and at the other a daughter; in one world a parent who sought the conversion and salvation of his children, and in the other those children, neglectful, impenitent, unbelieving. The time is coming when one portion of a family, redeemed and sanctified, shall ascend to heaven, elevated to its glories by the religion of the Redeemer; the other portion will live on, indeed, but in the GREAT SEPARATION THAT IS TO BE ETERNAL. To this all things tend. Every communion hastens it; every closing year, every month, every week, every Sabbath, every day. To-day it has been determined in relation to multitudes who have left the earth for eternity; ere the shades of this night pass away, it will be determined in regard to multitudes more.

The subject is one that cannot be pursued further without exciting emotions that would produce pain without profit. My object in presenting it will be gained if it secures two or three results which I will now state in the conclusion of the discourse.

1. If it leads christians here to feel more deeply, and to pray more fervently, for their impenitent children, partners in life, parents, and friends. To-day you are separate from them. They evince no love for our great and blessed Redeemer. How natural, how proper, to ask whether they are to be separate in the grave, and for ever, as well as in the church on earth! How appropriate to bear them on our hearts when *we* are near the cross, and to beseech, even with tears, the Redeemer to have mercy on those whom we tenderly love!

Friends of the Savior! Ye who can scarcely bear the thought of

separation from your children for a month or a day, how can you think of being separated from them for ever? Ye parents who are sleepless with anguish when they suffer on a bed of pain, who watch with earnest solicitude over them in the slow-moving hours of night, how can you bear the thought that they are to suffer on for ever and ever? Ye who would start with horror at the thought of their sinking into a watery grave, or at the idea that they would be wrapped in flame in a burning vessel at sea, how can you be unmoved at the *possibility* that they may sink in an ocean of fire to roll amidst its billows forever? Rouse, parents, rouse! Awake, arise, and call upon your God that they may be saved!

2. If the subject leads those who are not now christians, to similar reflections, it will accomplish another object which I wish. Among those of you who do not profess to be christians, are husbands separate from your wives, parents from your children, children from your parents. From that father, and that mother, who have consecrated their hearts to the Son of God, and from that Savior to whom they have devoted themselves, you are divided. Shall this continue? Shall it be deepened and prolonged until it terminates *in the great separation that shall endure forever?* Dear objects of our earthly affection; friends whom we love more tenderly than we love any other friends, why not come and let heart beat against heart in love to the same Redeemer, and walk hand in hand with us in the same path to heaven? How can you bear the thought of an eternal separation from your christian friends? Divided in religion from us, yet you are not divided in affection. Without our hope of heaven, yet you love us; and though with different feelings in regard to the prospect of eternity, yet at home, at the table, at the fireside, in affliction, in joy, your heart beats against ours, and the same chord is struck in our souls and yours. Children of pious parents, parents of pious children, husbands of pious wives, how can you bear the thought of an eternal separation from your friends? How can you think of their walking on the banks of the river of life—happy spirits, while you wander—wretched outcasts—on the plains of despair? How can you think that all these tender ties are to be torn asunder, and that you are to be banished from them for ever and ever? Friends that we love! Awake! Arise! and call upon our God! Seek the salvation of the soul! O let the love begun on earth be perpetuated on the plains of heaven! Save us, O save us, we beseech you, from seeing you driven away from us that we may behold your faces no more!

3. A third result to which our subject should lead should be to cause us to look forward to the future world, and to contemplate the possibility that a family should be *united in heaven.* It is *possible* that there should be such an eternal union. It is not necessary that religion should make an eternal separation. There is nothing in the nature of christianity that naturally and necessarily demands this. There is no such adaptation of the gospel to one member or portion of a family only as to make such a result inevitable; there is no restricting of the

offer of salvation to the father, the mother, or to one of the children of a family; there is no limitation of the efficacy of the atonement which makes it impossible that the blood which saves one should save all; there is no such circumscribing of the power of the Holy Spirit that he can renew and sanctify only a portion of the family group. The blood which has been sprinkled on one heart may cleanse all; the same Spirit that has renewed and sanctified the father or mother is able to renew and sanctify each child; and the same grace of the gospel which prepared that loved and lovely sister who has been taken from you to walk by the side of the river of life in white raiment, can prepare you also to join with her and walk arm in arm on those shady banks. Look upward to yonder heavens. See there your smiling babe! It stretches out its hands and invites you. "Come, father, mother," is its sweet sound, "come and take the water of life." May not that same grace of the gospel which has raised that child to heaven, save you also?

Why should it not be? A whole family united in religion—what a spectacle of beauty on earth! A family lying side by side in their graves, to be united again in the same blessed resurrection, what a spectacle for angels to look down upon with interest! A whole family united in heaven—who can describe their everlasting joys? Not one is absent. Nor father, nor mother, nor son, nor daughter, are away. In the world below they were united in faith, and love, and peace, and joy. In the morning of the resurrection they ascended together. Before the throne they bow together in united adoration. On the banks of the river of life they walk hand in hand, and as a family they have commenced a career of glory that shall be everlasting. There *is to be* hereafter no separation in that family. No one is to lie down on a bed of pain. No one is to wander away into temptation. No one is to sink into the arms of death. Never in heaven is that family to move along in the slow procession, clad in the habiliments of woe, to consign one of its members to the tomb. For no member of the family is the soil of heaven ever to open its bosom to furnish a grave. God grant of his infinite mercy that every family in this assembly may thus be united in religion in all the joys and sorrows of this life; united when they lie down in the grave in the hope of the same resurrection; and united on the banks of the river of life, to drink of the streams of salvation for ever! AMEN.

SERMON CCCXLII

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PHILADELPHIA.

THE SOVEREIGN PURPOSE OF GOD TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO EFFORT.

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"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."—Acts xviii: 9, 10.

The Gospel, when first preached, every where encountered difficulties. The obstacles to its diffusion were laid primarily in the depravity of the human heart, but those obstacles were modified by the customs, the opinions, the prejudices, the philosophy which prevailed in particular places. In Jerusalem, the main difficulty arose from the disappointed hopes and the prejudices of the Jews; in Ephesus, from the dread of losing the gains accruing to a portion of the citizens from the connexion of the mechanic arts with idolatry; in Athens, from the reigning philosophy of the Epicureans and the Stoics. In Jerusalem, in Ephesus, and in many other places, the apostles had seen these difficulties give way, and the gospel assert its ascendency there in the conversion of multitudes. On the philosophy of Athens almost no impression was made, and having preached there with less success than attended his ministry elsewhere, Paul turned his steps to the neighboring city of Corinth. Here a new difficulty met him. It was not Jewish prejudice; it was not the self-interest of men whose "gains" were likely to be taken from them by the prevalence of the new religion; it was not philosophy rendering the heart inaccessible to all the appeals of truth, it was that which has been always, wherever it has existed, a greater obstacle to the gospel than all these combined—the prevalence of moral corruption. In Corinth this corruption pervaded all classes of citizens. It made the name of the city proverbial throughout Greece, and the world. It had caused splendid temples to be reared devoted to impurity. It attracted strangers there from all

lands, and that splendid city had become the centre of pollution for the whole world. Amidst this universal dissoluteness of manners, Paul needed some special encouragement in his work there. That encouragement was granted him, and the record of it constitutes my text. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; *for I have much people in this city.*" That is, he had 'much people' there whom he *designed* to convert and save. It cannot mean that there were many there who were *then* his people, or who in fact loved and served him, for that was not true, and that was not the encouragement which Paul needed. It must mean that there were those there in large numbers whom he intended to save, and to whom he now sent the gospel as the means of their conversion, and whom, therefore, He, who calls "things that are not as though they were," might call "his people." In the corrupt, debased, and sunken mass then bowing down in polluted temples, and giving unrestrained indulgence to the form of sin which offers the most direct resistance to "the gospel of the blessed God," there were those whom he meant to "wash, to sanctify, and to justify, in the name of the Lord Jesus," and to save. The doctrine of the text, then, it is not difficult to perceive. It is, that the purposes of divine sovereignty are an encouragement to efforts in doing good; or the fact that it is the intention of God to bring his chosen people to heaven, should stimulate us, and cheer us on in our efforts to save souls. This doctrine I propose now to illustrate and defend.

I am aware that it is often supposed that this doctrine has just the opposite tendency. I am not ignorant of the form in which it is often professedly held by the impenitent and the wicked, that "if they are to be saved they will be, and that effort will be useless;" nor am I ignorant of the effect which it may be made to have on many of the professed friends of truth. There is no doctrine of the scriptures which may not be abused; and there is no occasion for denying that this has been so held by many ministers of the gospel, and many churches, as to produce any other effect than to stimulate them to effort for the salvation of souls. And I am not ignorant that there is often real difficulty in pure and honest minds on the subject. If God is a sovereign; if he has a purpose which embraces all things; if he has a plan of electing love by which he designs to save all those who will actually be saved, it *seems* to be a doctrine that will paralize effort; that will render fruitless all exertion; that repels all human interferance, and that must throw the cold chill of death over all the gushing sensibilities that would weep over the lost. But it is not desirable or necessary that it should have this effect on any minds. It had not on the mind of Paul; and I shall render a good service if I can show you that it does not necessarily or properly have this effect. The design of this discourse therefore, is to show, that so far from having of necessity this effect, *the purpose of God to save his elect, is the best ground of calculation, the best basis for effort, and the best encouragement for doing good in*

this world. I shall do this by a series of propositions closely connected but plain, and so clear to all, that I trust they will leave no doubt of their truth.

I. The first is, that in the work of salvation there are many things to be done which are wholly beyond human power, or where the agency of man will be wholly insufficient. In other words, there is a sphere of operations which belongs only to God, and where he only can efficiently act. It is, indeed, no less true, that the same principle exists in regard to all that is to be done with which the agency of a created being has any connexion, but my object requires me to illustrate it particularly only with reference to religion. A man plants a field, or sets out a vine. There is a sphere of agency in the result contemplated that appertains only to God, and where he only can operate, and any calculation which shall anticipate the result without that agency would certainly fail. All that pertains to the sun-beam; to the rain; to the dew; to the revolution of the earth and the return of the seasons; to the atmosphere, to the mysterious laws by which the juices are conveyed through the fibres of the root, and carried up the stem, and diffused to each leaf, and branch, and tendril; to the delicate and beautiful agency by which the leaf is opened, and the fruit formed and matured, all this belongs to God, and there is no human agency that can be substituted in its place. A man fits out a vessel for a distant port. In the success of this mercantile adventure there is a sphere of operations wholly beyond the reach of man. All that relates to the freedom of the ocean from dangerous storms, to prosperous gales, to the purity of the air which the mariner is to breathe on a foreign strand, and to the preservation of life and health, appertain to the exclusive agency of God; and he who leaves out this as a part of his calculation, leaves out that which is an essential element in the question of success. A physician approaches a sick man and prescribes for him. In his recovery there is a work which appertains wholly to God. In the laws which govern health, in the recuperative powers of the human frame, in the guarding of the system from some other insidious and dangerous attack, and in the prolongation of the vital functions, there is a sphere where God only can act. There is no skill, or wisdom, or power, which can do what God has reserved for himself to do;—and though man has done much and boasted more; though he claims to have disarmed the lightning, and can almost people the canvass with living forms, and make the marble breathe; and though he has set up an empire over seas and floods, yet he has made no invasion on the prerogatives of the Almighty, or passed the bounds which were fixed when it was said to him, as to the ocean, "Thus far, but no farther." He paints no flower; he gilds no insect's wing; he colors no rainbow on the sky; he lights up no dead matter with the brilliancy of the living eye; he teaches no vital current to meander through an organized frame diffusing beauty, and health, and life. And to the end of time there will be a sphere in which God alone will act, and which will never be invaded by the wit, the skill, or the power of man.

The same thing is just as true in the salvation of the soul. There *is* a sphere where God only acts; where he only will act; where he only can act. It may not always be easy to mark the limits where human power terminates and where God only can act, but no man can doubt that there *are* such boundaries on all subjects, and the number is not small where it is known that the power of man does not extend. It is settled that he cannot take the lightning in his hands and "direct it under the whole heaven," (Job 37: 3.) he cannot wield the thunderbolt; he cannot hold the fixed-star in its place; he cannot "guide Arcturus and his sons;" he cannot breathe life into the stiffened corse. So in religion. There *are* points where all human agency terminates and is powerless. We may not now be able to mark them all, but there are some that are known. Man cannot pardon sin committed against God, any more than he can bid flowers to spring up to beautify the landscape, or move the stars. He cannot arouse a sinner from his death in sin and breathe into him spiritual life any more than he can raise the dead. He cannot defend the church against her foes, or carry forward her great operations unaided, any more than he can keep up the operations of animated nature. He cannot fix the wandering affections, or control the will, or change the heart of neighbor, brother, or child, any more than he can wield the rapid lightning and fetter it to obey his mandate. He cannot place nations in a posture to receive the gospel, or dispose them to a readiness to throw away their idols, and welcome the herald of salvation. To accomplish these, and kindred things, there is but one power in the universe that is sufficient, and man can substitute nothing in the place of that power. He can do much in his proper sphere; but when he has done all, it will be still true with reference to these things that "it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." Man can do much by improving his mental philosophy; he can make large advances in theological knowledge; he can urge far towards perfection his schemes of philanthropy, but he makes no advances in the work of accomplishing in religion what God has reserved for himself to do, any more than in his laboratory he makes advances towards the proper skill and power for creating life in the vegetable world. The work of pardoning sin, of converting and sanctifying the soul, of preserving the church, and of preparing the way for the universal reign of righteousness, is reserved in his own hands, and pertains to a sphere of agency of his own. In regard to such things, *a calculation of success on the basis of man's power*, MUST CERTAINLY FAIL.

II. In the second place, there are many things in regard to salvation, which, although man *might* do them, it is certain he never *will* do them, and the just ground of dependence is to be on the Sovereignty of God. This, also, often occurs in other matters than religion. There are numerous cases in which men *might* save themselves from poverty, and wretchedness, and dissipation, and an early grave, where there is a moral certainty that they never *will* do it, and we can make no calculation on the presumption that they will do it. A man may be so deaf

to all the calls of duty, to self-respect, and to the admonitions of conscience; he may be so under the influence of impetuous and raging passion, that it may be morally certain that, though he has ample power, he never *will* forsake his evil way unless an influence from above shall arrest and change him. So it is in the matter of salvation. We think we can show that a moral agent, such as man is, has all necessary natural ability to obey the law of God; to comply with the terms of the gospel; to repent of his sins; to love his Maker; to forsake the ways of transgression; to lead a holy life. We think a sinner lacks no natural ability to enable him to attend seriously to the subject of religion; to give up his heart to God; to avail himself of the offers of mercy and be saved. We think here is a field of possible human agency, very interesting and very broad, which might be occupied, though it never has been by man. This view we think results from the very nature of moral agency and accountability, nor have we any way of vindicating the character of God if he requires of man more than in any sense he has the power to render. Such a doctrine we think is a violation of the principles of judgment in moral matters with which our Creator has endowed us, and we think it equally clear that it is contrary to the Bible.

But all this may be so, and yet it may be certain that no man will of himself ever put forth his power, or do what he might do in the matter of his own salvation. It is a power which has never been exercised—probably the only power that has always lain wholly dormant in the human soul. Man does not seem to be endowed with any power to move masses of matter, which he has not at some time exercised. He does not seem to have any power to brave the cold of the north, or to climb mountain heights, or to carry fire and sword into regions of unoffending peace, or to corrupt and destroy his fellow-men, or to resist the elements, which he has not at some time put forth. But there is a dormant power in the soul in the matter of salvation, which man of himself never *has* put forth and never *will*. So sunk is he in sin, so absorbed in self, so opposed to holiness and God, so blind to truth and duty, so averse to the cross, so hardened in depravity, that this power never has been exerted, self-originated, since the fall, *and all calculations of success in religion on the basis of the expectation that man* WILL *exert it are vain.* You may satisfy his understanding that there is a God, perfectly pure and lovely, but you have done nothing to induce him to love him; you may convince his reason of the claims of christianity, but you have made no advances towards leading him cordially to embrace it; you may press all the motives upon his conscience drawn from his infinite obligations, and the claims of a perfect law, but you have gained no point where the sinner yields; you may appeal to all his interests, and urge all the solemn considerations you can draw from the hope of heaven and the dread of hell—from the desirableness of a peaceful death and a crown of glory, but you have done nothing to induce him to embrace that religion with which he knows all this is to be identified. You may describe the

crown of glory, and the white robe of salvation, and the river of life, and the throne of God, so that the description would thrill through the bosom of an angel, but you have done nothing to move the heart of man. And you may portray the flames, the blackness, and torments of an eternal hell, so that all heaven would tremble if the description were given there, and you have done nothing to move, arouse, or alarm man. Not a point is gained; not even momentary alarm is excited; nor from the deepest scene of wo and sorrow can the sinner of himself be induced for a moment to turn the eye on the bright fields of glory before him.

We know this is an anomaly; and we feel it—but still it is so. Every where else, except in religion, we have a strong assurance of success when we appeal to men's reason, and conscience, and to their obvious and undeniable interest. Here we have none. They sit unmoved when listening to the most affecting and awful truths of religion; or if moved it is only when they are roused to offer resistance. For any thing that they care, the groans of Calvary might have been prolonged to the end of time; and for any effort which they will make, the harps of salvation might be unstrung forever. They follow the world when they know it will deceive them; they run the round of giddy vanity when they know it is all false and hollow; they listen to the syren voice of pleasure when it has a thousand times betrayed them; they indulge in wild and tumultuous passions when they know they will ruin them; they refuse to return to God when conscience, and reason, and hope, and fear, all prompt them to secure the salvation of the soul. They are haters of God, when they have abundant power to be his friends; degraded slaves to passion, when they might be ennobled freemen; miserable, when they might be happy; troubled, anxious, and sad, when they might be calm; trembling under the dread of death, when they might look on it with triumph; restless, jaded and dissatisfied, when their bosoms might be the abode of peace; and expiring without hope when the dying bed might be irradiated by a flood of glory poured down from heaven. Such is man; and whatever may be said about his *ability*—and much *may* be said—it is still true, always has been true, always will be true, that men "will not come to God that they might have life." He that goes forth preaching the gospel, or in any other good work, making it the basis of his calculation that men will of themselves be disposed to yield, and become christians, is destined to the same disappointment that Melancthon was. "I thought," said he, "that I could persuade every man to be a christian; but I found the old Adam too strong for the young Melancthon." He may see them convinced of the truth of religion under his preaching; silenced by his demonstrations; kept at bay by his undisputed learning or talent, but he will not see them yield the heart to God. He may see them become restless under the truth which he urges; or curling the lip in scorn at some of his positions; or trembling like Felix under his reasonings; or almost converted like Agrippa by his argument; or aroused and [illegible] like Festus; or grieved like the young man

who had great possessions, but he will see no giving up of the heart to religion. He may minister for decades of years—till preacher and hearer grow grey together—to those who are convinced of the truth of these things, but they will not yield; or he may see his hearers turning their backs on his ministry, and fleeing from the house of God forever—though convinced that all that he says is true. Such is preaching—arduous, difficult, strange, glorious, Godlike work! And if these things are so, then the ground of calculation of success is not on what man *will* do, but must be found in a sovereign God.

III. In the third place, I observe, therefore, that the divine sovereignty is a more certain basis of calculation of success in efforts to promote religion, than any thing else is. This might be presented as an *inference* from what has been said, for if we can depend neither on the power, nor the willingness of man, then we have no other basis of hope than in God. But I choose to present it as a separate *argument*. It will thus be a step towards a just conclusion, as well as corroborate what has been said. I observe, then, that you can make no certain calculation on any thing else. This is true in all other things, and it is true also in religion. You cannot calculate with absolute certainty on a continuance of even what are called the laws of nature—the most fixed things of which we have any knowledge—for God has power at any moment to change them. The statesman cannot calculate with certainty how men will act in given circumstances, familiar as he may be with the records of the past;—for the past has not been observed with sufficient care, and to sufficient extent; the motives of men have not been sufficiently understood; the lessons which history *might* teach are not well enough learned;—or the will, and passions, and prejudices of men come in as a disturbing cause, and disappoint all his sagacious plans and prophecyings—for who can with certainty estimate the power of the human will and human passions as a *disturbing* cause in the execution of his schemes of policy, any more than the mariner can estimate the power of the whirlwind and the tempest in disturbing his voyage? You cannot calculate with certainty on the return of a richly freighted ship from a distant port, or on a harvest, or on the success of any enterprize—for a thousand disturbing causes come in, which you cannot forsee, to frustrate your plans. Health may fail, or a blight may come over your fields, or the locust may devour, or the palmer worm may consume what he has left, or the wind may blow from some unforseen quarter, or pirates may swarm on the deep, and all your calculations shall fail. So it is in doing good, and especially in the effort to convert a sinner from the error of his way, and to promote religion in the world, there is nothing *in* man that can be a basis of certain calculation and of hope. The sinner has a conscience;—but you are by no means certain that he will allow it to perform its proper functions as the vicegerent of God. He may silence its reproofs by direct effort; he may pervert its decisions by bad philosophy or theology; or he may indulge in sin till it is seared as with a hot iron. He has an understanding;—but you are by no means certain

that it will be allowed to perform its just offices. It may be blinded in its views; perverted in its judgments; or directly resisted by the will when it would lead the soul to God. He has a heart;—but you have no security that it will love right things, or that all its affections will not be perverse and ruinous. You have no basis of calculation that when you present a holy object to the human heart it will be loved; none that when the most vile and debasing is presented the affections will not cling and cluster around it. The sinner has a will;—but in religion its decisions are more likely to be wrong than right; they will be certainly wrong, we think, unless the grace of God shall incline to that which is good. The sinner has great interests at stake, and he was so made by his Creator as to be fitted to act in view of them, but you have no evidence that he will do it. He is more likely to seek a gilded bauble than the diadem of glory; and the most worthless gewgaw, or withering night-shade, this side the grave, has more attractions in his eye, than the infinite riches and the crown incorruptible beyond. If you make a calculation that the sinner will of his own accord suffer the powers of his understanding, and heart, and will, to act in accordance with their lofty nature, and to lead him to God, you will certainly be disappointed. The experience of the world is against you. Thousands, and millions, and hundreds of millions, have lived and died impenitent under all the solemn truths and appeals which you can bring to bear on their hearts, and you have no truth and no power of argument which has not been tried in vain countless numbers of times.

But how can the sovereign power of God be made the basis of calculation of success in efforts to do good? I answer, (1) none of the causes which defeat your plans will affect his. No tempest shall howl from an unforseen quarter to frustrate his purposes; no blight or mildew shall disappoint his hopes; no obduracy of the human heart, or perverseness of the will, can operate as a disturbing cause to his plans; no loss of health, or life, or change of times, can stay the execution of his fixed schemes. I answer, (2) God has purposes of mercy about the salvation of man which *can* be a basis of calculation. He had at Corinth; he has in reference to every age, and to every land. He meant that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church; he said that his "word should not return to him void;" he has solemnly sworn that to him "shall every knee bow and every tongue confess." The Savior said, "other sheep have I which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice;" (John x: 16.) and there are those who were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; being predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will," (Eph. i: 4. 4.) and nothing can prevent their being brought into the kingdom. I answer, (3) the purposes of God are those which contemplate the gathering in of those who shall be saved, in connexion with appropriate human efforts, and especially the preaching of the gospel. It is not by the exertion of independent power; it is not by miracles; it is in con-

nexion with the use of means adapted to the end. And though some may be saved by means and influences which we cannot trace, yet the great law is, that it is in connexion with appropriate efforts that men are to be saved. Beyond those efforts, there is no certain basis of calculation in regard to the salvation of men. Within them, it is limited to the sovereign purpose of God, and were there no such purpose those efforts would be in vain. That purpose lies deep in the Eternal Mind. It has lain there undisturbed from the infinite past. It has been unchanged as suns have risen and set; as kingdoms have been founded and fallen; as human schemes have been formed, modified, and abandoned; as stars have been created and have disappeared. In all these revolutions the mind of God about human salvation has been one—without any new purpose, without any change of place, without any tendency to its being abandoned or defeated. "He doeth according to his pleasure in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou." Dan. iv: 35. "I am God," says he, "and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are yet to be done, saying, MY COUNSIL SHALL STAND, AND I WIIL DO ALL MY PLEASURE." Isa. xlvi: 10. It is that immutable counsel which constitutes all the basis of calculation for success in doing good in this lost world. And that is enough. *What more desirable basis of calculation* CAN *there be, than the unchanging purpose of an infinitely benevolent God?*

IV. There is a fourth consideration to which I shall just advert, though the time will not allow me to do the justice to it which I could desire. It is, that the actual exercise of that sovereignty is such as to be an encouragement to effort. In the case of the apostle Paul at Corinth, guilty and wicked as that city was, his success there was such as was fitted to lead him to rely more and more on the sovereign purpose of God to save men. The same was true elsewhere. No man probably ever went forth to an important enterprize under a more abiding conviction of the truth of the doctrine of divine sovereignty than did the apostle Paul. "I have planted," said he, "and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii: 6. 8. "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." 1 Cor. xv: 10. So the preservation of the church in dark periods; the revivals of religion which have attended the preaching of the gospel; the success which has attended every well formed plan for doing good, all show how much encouragement there is in these efforts to depend on the sovereign mercy of God. Paul himself was arrested when there was no human basis of calculation that would cheer the hearts of a bleeding church that the great persecutor would be converted; and in thousands of similar instances, the infidel chieftain, the persecutor, the scoffer, the profane, the man proud in philosophy and confident in his own righteousness, the man educated, as Paul was, for a different pur-

pose, and with a different plan of life, has been suddenly arrested, humbled, changed by a power which he neither could, nor would then resist, and made to preach that Savior which he had before persecuted. So, too, in the darkest period in the history of the church, clouds have been cleared away; divisions have been healed; the fires of persecution have been put out; kingdoms and men that have opposed the gospel have been destroyed by a sovereign God in a manner which no human calculation could have foretold, and in such a manner that it was seen that it was directly by the finger of the Almighty.

But what I wished particularly to say, was, that the success attending efforts to do good which actually occurs, is just such as to lead men to recognize their dependance, and to trace all to the interposition of a sovereign God. Now, the preacher labors for years apparently in vain, and his message seems like seed scattered on hard rocks; then, the soil seems to be made mellow by some invisible influence and every word takes effect; now, all his arguments, and appeals, and instructions, are disregarded alike by the aged and the young; then, truth so simple as to appear adapted to children, has power to arrest the man of age, and wisdom, and experience, and learning, and turn him to God; now, a whole congregation sit unmoved under an argument of truth; then, all are bowed down under the same truth as a forest bends before the mighty wind; and now, while the mass are unconcerned, the arrow shot at a venture reaches the heart of some poor sinner that came with no special preparation, and, wounded, and writhing with anguish, he comes to God for help. All this is the work of a sovereign God;—our encouragement to effort; our argument for his agency; our demonstration of the truth of the great doctrines of grace; and the stay of our souls when we seem to labor in vain, and to spend our strength for nought. And I presume that every minister of the gospel when he looks back on his ministry to learn from the past what are the real grounds of his encouragement in his work, looks instinctively to such manifestations of the power of a sovereign God.—The argument which I designed to submit is now before you. Among the lessons which it teaches are the following.

1. The true nature of the sinner's dependance on God. All men are ready philosophically to admit that they are dependent on their Creator, but this doctrine is so held as to produce no practical effect on the mind. The sinner will admit that he is dependent for life, and health, and reason, and strength, and favorable junctures for the prosecution of his plans, as all men are. In common with all the race, also, he is dependent on God for the offer of mercy, and the knowledge that there is a way of salvation, and for the arrangements which God has made, and which were beyond the power of man. But the point of most immediate interest in this matter is, that he is dependent on God to do what he *could* himself do, but *will* not do; what he is under the most sacred obligation to accomplish, but what, such is his determined wickedness, he never *will* accomplish. He is dependent on his Maker for a disposition to love him; to attend to his own interests; to feel

feel compunctions of guilt where he has done wrong; to take one step in securing his own salvation. In a matter of the plainest obligation, and where the power is ample, he will never think a right thought, or have a right feeling, or be influenced by a right motive to all eternity, unless he is led to it by a God whom he hates, and whose agency he scorns and rejects. And hence,

2. We may see the nature of human wickedness. It is so deep in the soul; so fixed and determined in its character, that man never will be or can be led to do right without the intervention of the mighty power of God. There are no human means that will overcome it. There is no power of argument or persuasion; no regard to his own real happiness in this world, or to his immortal destiny in the next; no pleadings of affection, that will induce the sinner to break off from his sins, and return to his Maker. Man is endowed with an understanding, but in religion he will not follow its dictates; he has a conscience, but he resists its decisions and promptings; he has a will, but it is perverse and obstinate; he is capable of affection, but his heart is attached to improper things, and he will not love his Maker; he has interests of infinite value at stake, but he will not think of them or regard them; he is going to hell, and will not be warned to avoid it; he might go to heaven, but there is nothing that will induce him to seek its glories. The simple reason for this conduct, so strange—so passing strange—is, the wickedness of the heart. And that wickedness is no slight matter which will lead an immortal soul thus to make itself everlastingly wretched; and which resists all the arguments and appeals, which even *God* can place before the mind, rather than forsake it.

3. We see what is the prospect about the salvation of the sinner. The whole question is lodged in the bosom of a sovereign God; and it will be just as he decides. If an influence descends from heaven you will be saved. If not, you will not be. There is no other power to save men; and we frankly and most kindly say to you, one and all, that our hope of your conversion is not in any native tendency to goodness which we believe you to possess, or any inclination which you have to do right, or any belief that you will of yourselves ever be any more disposed to attend to your salvation than you are now. Nor is it in any expectation that appeals can be made to your understanding, or conscience, or heart, or will, or self-interest, that will induce you of yourselves to come to God. We have learned not to preach with any such vain and illusive expectation as that. Our hope is in that sovereign God who by his own power converted Saul of Tarsus, and Augustine, and Bunyan, and John Newton, and Col. Gardner, and all the infidels, and scoffers, and gay triflers, who have ever gone to glory, or are on their way; and we believe the question of your salvation is lodged solely in the bosom of that sovereign. Mysterious secret! Lodged and buried there in a heart into which no mortal looks and which no mortal controls! Dread Sovereign! The destiny of all hangs on thee! If so, then,

4. We see where our encouragement lies—how ministers should preach, and how christians should labor for the salvation of their fellow men. We should not be discouraged. We should not feel that sin will finally prevail. We should not fear that a torn and bleading church will be extinct. We should not feel that wickedness is to triumph in the earth, nor that all that are now wicked will go down to hell. Every thing may seem to dishearten us. In our spheres of labor there may be all the embarrassments that opposed the gospel when first preached. There may be all the prejudice that led the Jews to reject it; all the love of gain that opposed it at Ephesus; all the pride of philosophy that met it at Athens; and all the profligacy adapted to sicken the soul of the Apostle at Corinth, but there is the same God to carry forward the triumphs of the gospel; and in reference to a wicked world we may hear him say, "Be not afraid, for I am with thee, speak and hold not thy peace;" and is it fancy or the faith of fanaticism that seems to hear him say to each minister and each christian, "no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city?" In the great work in which we are engaged let us then direct our eyes and our hearts to the Great Sovereign to whose mercy are to be traced all our own hopes of salvation. There *are* things which man cannot perform in the matter of religion; there are things which, though he *might* perform them he will not; there is no certain basis of calculation in our appeals to the understandings or the hearts of men, but there *is* in the plans of divine sovereignty, and our own experience has taught us so. The world is wicked. Our friends are unconcerned about their salvation. Our kindred, and partners, and parents, and children, are regardless of their welfare in the future world, and nothing arouses them to ask the way to life. Whither shall we go? Where shall we look for help? Where can we find a solid rock of hope in our efforts? In the hope that God will mercifully interpose where *we* have no power, and that he will diffuse joy through our souls by their conversion when our hearts are ready to sink within us. Our place is at the feet of that Great Sovereign where we found mercy for our own souls—and there let us lie and plead, with strong crying and tears, in behalf of Zion, until "the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

5. Finally, my brethren in the ministry will recognize in the doctrine of this discourse nothing but what has come home a thousand times with peace and consolation to their own hearts. In the hours of our sadness and despondency—and they are many—when we feel that our preaching does good to no one, and that the word of truth seems to fall on the hard rock—we have had no where else to look for encouragement but to the high purposes of the God whom we serve. Then we have felt, that however man might receive the message, all is fixed and certain with Him who has called us into the ministry. What though the purpose be concealed from us, and we have no power to penetrate the secret counsels in JEHOVAH'S mind; what though in our efforts we could not tell which would prosper whether this or that; and what

though we had no power to move the Eternal Arm to rescue the soul from death, yet our souls have been stayed with the unshaken belief that God *means* to save men, and that those "whom he has ordained to eternal life" will believe. *Then God has blessed us.* When we have felt this truth most deeply, then we were most strong, and most blessed. The soul never feels it so much as in the thrilling scenes of a revival of religion; and men never preach with so much power and so much success, as when they lie low before God, and feel that the whole question respecting the salvation of their hearers is lodged with him. Then mighty obstacles yield; "the mountains and hills are made low, and the rough places plain. The glory of the Lord is revealed, and all flesh see it together." In the great work to which God has called us in the field which he has appointed us to occupy; amidst all the obstacles which *we* have to meet from the love of gain, the prevalence of unbelief, the self-confidence of philosophy, the gaiety, the fashon, and the vanity of the world; and in all the obstructions which we may ever meet from the opposition of erring brethren, our hope of success is in the sovereign power of God. If our counsels and plans are formed with confidence in Him they will not fail; if resting on our own wisdom and strength, we shall find them again, as we have often found them to our sorrow, formed in vain.

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SERMON CCCXLIII.

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THE SEA GIVING UP ITS DEAD.

DELIVERED AT THE TIME OF A COLLECTION MADE FOR THE AMERICAN SEAMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it."—Rev. xx. 13.

The resurrection was a favorite theme with the Apostles. The fact of Christ's having risen, was with them the crowning miracle of his earthly course, and an irrefragable argument of his divine mission. The resurrection of all mankind by Christ's power, to be judged at Christ's bar, was one of the truths upon which the first ministers of the gospel sought to turn the eyes of all their hearers. Peter preached this doctrine to the scribes of Jerusalem, and Paul proclaimed it amid the philosophers of Athens. And what thoughts struggle within us, as we look forward to such a change! These corruptible bodies shall stand again in the closest companionship with the souls that once inhabited them,—that at death deserted them but which now have resumed them. According to the deeds done in the body, men are to be judged. The term of probation closed when the spirit quitted the body, and dropped it into the grave. The time of judgment begins when that grave is opened and that body reanimated, "that every one may receive the things done in his body."* We are prone, perhaps, to think too much of these perishable tabernacles of clay. But we do not, my beloved hearers, think enough of them, unless we think of them often and vividly, as bodies that are one day to rise again, endued with an indestructible existence, and capacitated for the endless bliss of heaven, or the eternal misery of hell.

I. This great doctrine, the resurrection of the body, seems yet better fitted than the kindred truth of the immortality of the soul, to make a powerful impression on the mind of man, when receiving the

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

gospel for the first time. The heathen may have heard of the existence after death of the immaterial spirit within him; but he thinks of that principle as something impalpable and unearthly, that he has never yet seen, and that is scarce the same with himself. He may have heard even that after death he should still have a body. He may have been taught, as many an idolatrous creed teaches its votaries, that the soul shall pass after death into other bodies of the higher or the lower orders of being. But this doctrine of the transmigration of souls cannot take the same hold on his mind as does the scriptural truth, teaching him the resurrection of the existing body. The thoughts of the man, his fears, his hopes, and his plans have had reference chiefly to the body. Bring him to look upon it as possible, that this,—the material frame-work in which he has enjoyed or suffered, by which he has labored and acquired, which he has clothed and fed, and in which he has sinned—this body, which in most of his thoughts, has been regarded as the *whole* of himself,—is to live again beyond the grave, and he is startled. Talk to him of the inward man of the soul, and he listens, as if you spoke of a stranger. But bring your statements home to the outward man of his body, and he feels that it is he *himself*, who is to be happy or to be wretched in that eternity of which you tell him. Hence a living missionary, in his first religious instructions to the king of a heathen tribe in South Africa, found him indifferent and callous to all his statements of the gospel, until this truth was announced. It aroused in the barbarian chief the wildest emotions, and excited an undisguised alarm. He had been a warrior, and had lifted up his spear against multitudes slain in battle. He asked, in amazement, if these his foes should all live. And the assurance that they should arise, filled him with perplexity and dismay, such as he could not conceal. He could not abide the thought. A long slumbering conscience had been pierced through all its coverings. Well do such incidents illustrate the fact, that He who gave the gospel knew what was in man, and infused into the leaven of his own word those elements that are mightiest to work upon all the powers of man's soul, and to penetrate with their influence the whole mass of human society. And in our announcement of that gospel, we do well to adhere to the scriptural pattern given us by the Author of the gospel. Many of the other doctrines of Christianity are almost insensibly modified, in our mode of presenting them, by the natural religion which intimates, if it does not establish, these or similar truths. But the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is not a doctrine of natural religion. It is purely a doctrine of revelation, and becomes known to us merely from the living oracles of Scripture. And as man's reason did not discover it, it is not for man's reason to alter or amend the doctrine according to his caprices and prejudices.

In what glorious and terrific imagery does the Scripture before us array the scenes of the resurrection. In the heavens, thronged by angels in all their glory, is seen the descending throne. Upon it, in

his own and his Father's glory, sits the Son of Man, the crucified Nazarene, now the judge of quick and dead. Before him the material heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat. The creation cannot abide the dread presence of its Creator, "from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away;" and yet they cannot escape it: "and there was found no place for them." His bare word had accomplished the miracle of creation, and now by a kindred act of power, his mere glance shakes the world, and awes it into preparation for the judgment. The old heathen talked of their "cloud-compelling Jove," whose eye gathered all the storms of the skies. But how mean is all this to the scriptural imagery of a world-compelling Christ. The trumpet sounds. The earth shakes with inward commotions. Its dead—its ancient dead—all the buried of forgotten tribes, and of antediluvian times, are coming; more numerous than the hosts ever mustered by earthly captain to the battle, yet all their numbers infuse into them no courage in meeting their Judge. They have no thought of resisting His power. Whatever the gods in whom they trusted once, they feel now the presence, and await the fiat of the one true God, Maker and Judge of heaven and earth. The patriarchs, who lived when the world was young, and the coming generations to be born long after our death, who shall have lived when that world had grown old, shall, with us, stand before the judgment seat. From this tribunal there lies no appeal, and of the sentence now to be uttered there can be no reversal, and no revision.

It will be a scene of solemn interest, not only as the meeting of man with his Redeemer and Judge, but from the meeting of mankind together. The scriptural accounts of the judgment represent it as an occasion when we shall know ourselves at least. From their descriptions of that day, as a day of disclosures, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, they seem also to imply that we shall know others, and be known by them. Without our consciousness of our own identity, there could evidently be no sense of guilt; and without our knowledge of the identity of our fellow sinners, it seems to us, there could be no disclosures, such as the Bible predicts. Man then, in that gathering, will not only know himself, and know his God, but he will know his race. And this, to the sinner, will add inconceivably to the terrors of that assembling. The ungodly will meet there the righteous, who warned him in vain, and all whose warnings are about to be verified. Long forgotten emotions, and privileges undervalued and misimproved, will flash upon the memory, as the eye glances on the face of some dead friend, with whom those feelings and opportunities were associated. The unconverted child of the Sabbath schools shall face his faithful teacher; and parents and children, pastors and people, all the connexions which death had for a time sundered, shall there recognise each other. It will be to some a fearful meeting, as they encounter there for the first time those whose death they had occasioned. The murderer will confront

his victim. Cain and Abel, who have been, perhaps, parted from each other since the hour when the fratricide fled from the scene of his crime, and the body of his brother lay breathless in the dust, will now meet again. The body which sunk beneath that murderous blow, dealt by a brother's hand, and the hand which inflicted that blow, will be there, gathered again from the indiscriminate dust over which the world has trodden for scores of centuries. But if it be fearful to meet thus, any on whom we may have brought temporal death, how much more may the scene be dreaded, by those who have occasioned the spiritual death of others, as the scene of their meeting with the proselytes and admirers, whose souls they aided in ruining forever. It will be sad for Caiaphas to meet the innocent Messiah whom he adjudged to death, though it was but the death of the body; but it would seem almost equally sad for the Jewish High Priest to face there his kindred and friends, whose unbelief his arguments sealed, and whose impenitence his example served to render obdurate and final, for upon them he will have brought the death of the soul. The meetings of the resurrection will form, then, no small portion of its terrors. This is the truth, upon which we would chiefly insist, from the part of Scripture now before us. We have considered, generally, the resurrection of the dead. Let us proceed next to consider the dead of the sea, who are in our text distinguished from the rest of the dead; and thence let us pass to the effects of their re-union with the rest of mankind, who ended their mortal career elsewhere than on the deep. Our remaining divisions will be, therefore,

II. The sea giving up its dead.
III. The meeting of the dead, so given up of the sea, with the dead of the land.

II. The sea will be found thickly peopled with the mortal remains of mankind. In the earlier ages of the world, when the relations of the various nations to each other were generally those of bitter hostility, and the ties of a common brotherhood were little felt, the sea, in consequence of their comparative ignorance of navigation, served as a barrier, parting the tribes of opposite shores, who might else have met only for mutual slaughter, ending in extermination. Now that a more peaceful spirit prevails, the sea, which once served to preserve, by dividing the nations, has, in the progress of art and discovery, become the channel of easier intercourse, and the medium of uniting the nations. It is the great highway of traffic, a highway on which the builder cannot encroach, and no monarch possesses the power of closing the path, or engrossing the travel. Thus continually traversed, the ocean has become, to many of its adventurous voyagers, the place of burial. But it has been also the scene of battle, as well as the highway of commerce. Upon it have been decided many of those conflicts which determined the dynasty or the race, to whom for a time should be committed the empire of the world. It was on the sea, in the fight of

Salamis, that the fleets of Greece and Persia contended, whether the despotism and wealth of the East should extend their widening sway over the freedom and arts of the West. It was in the sea-fight of Actium, that the imperial power of Rome, then claiming dominion over the world, was assured to Augustus and his successors, and the way was prepared for the universal peace that reigned at our Savior's birth. On this element was fought the battle of Lepanto, where the right-arm of the Ottoman was broken. And, as we come down to our own times, the fights of Aboukir, Trafalgar, and Navarino, all contests upon the sea, were battles affecting in no slight degree the destinies of all Europe, and the civilized world. All these have served to gorge the deep with the carcases of men. It has had, again, its shipwrecks. Though man may talk of his power to bridle the elements, and of the triumphs of art, compelling all nature to do his work, yet there are scenes on the sea in which he feels his proper impotence. And when God lets loose his winds, and calls up his billows, man becomes sensible of his dependence. How many in all ages, since commerce first began her voyages of profit or discovery, have perished in the waters, foundering in the midnight storm, driven on the unsuspected rocks, engulphed by the whirlpool, or dashed by winds against some iron-bound coast. Even in our own times, with all our improvements in the art of navigation, and with all the expenditures that are incurred to increase the mariner's security, it has been calculated by some, that each year one thousand ships are lost at sea.

The sea then has its dead. And when the trump is blown, the archangel's summons to the judgment, the sea shall give up these its long buried treasures. The gold and the jewels it has accumulated, the "buried argosies," with all their rich freight which it has swallowed up, will be permitted to slumber unreclaimed; but no relic that has formed part of the corpse of a child of Adam will be left unclaimed or unsurrendered in that hour. The invalid, who, in quest of health, embarked on the sea, and perished on the voyage, committed to the deep with the solemn ceremonies of religion,—the pirate, flung into the waves from a deck which he had made slippery with blood,—the emigrant's child, whose corpse its weeping parents surrendered to the deep on their way to a land of strangers,—the whaler, going down quick into death midst his adventurous employment,—the wretched slave, perishing amid the horrors of the Middle Passage,—the sailor, dropt from the yard-arm in some midnight gale,—the wrecked, and the dead in battle, all will arise at that summons. The mariners of all times, who have died on their loved element, those who rowed in the galleys of Tyre or Carthage, or manned the swift ships of Tarshish, will be there, together with the dead of our own days. The idolater, who sunk from some Chinese junk while invoking his graven images; and the missionary of the cross, who, like Coke, perished on his way to preach the gospel to the heathen, or who, like Chamberlain, compelled to return from the field of missionary toil, with shattered

health, and all wearied and spent with labors for Christ, has expired on his homeward way—all, all shall be there. As these shall re-appear from the entombing waters, will their coming have no effect upon the multitudes who died on the shore, and whose bodies also the cemeteries and sepulchres of earth shall on that day have restored? We have thus reached the last division of our subject.

III. The meeting of the dead of the sea with the dead of the land.

1. There must be, then, in this resurrection from the sea, much to awaken feeling in the others of the risen dead, from this, if from no other cause: these, the dead of the sea, will be the *kindred and near connexions* of those who died upon the land. Among those whom the waters shall in that day have restored, will be some who quitted home expecting a speedy return, and for whose coming attached kindred and friends looked long, but looked in vain. The exact mode, and scene, and hour of their deaths have remained until that day unknown to the rest of mankind. And can it be, without feeling, that these will be seen again by those who loved them, and who through weary years longed for their return, still feeding "the hope that keeps alive despair?" The dead of ocean will be the children and pupils, again, of the dead of the land. Their moral character may have been formed, and their eternal interests affected, less by their later associates on the deep, than by the earlier instructions they received on shore. They may have exhibited on the deck and in the forecastle only the examples they witnessed in the nursery, and the tempers they cherished, and the habits they formed in the home. When these are restored, they are restored to witness for or against their parents, and the associates of their childhood and youth. These last may have died on shore, but by their influence on the mariner, they have transmitted their own spirit and moral character over the wide waste of waters, to remote and barbarous shores. It cannot, in the very nature of the human soul, its memory, its affections, and its conscience remaining what they now are,—it cannot but be a scene of solemn interest, when the dead of the land shall behold their kindred dead of the sea.

2. Let it be remembered, again, that a very large proportion of those who have thus perished on the ocean, will appear to have perished in the *service* of the landsman. The mariner will appear very generally, we say, to have found his watery grave while in the service of those dwelling upon shore. Some in voyages of discovery, despatched on a mission to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge, or to discover new routes for commercial enterprize, and new marts for traffic. Thus perished the French navigator La Peyrouse, whose fate was to the men of the last generation so long the occasion of anxious speculation. Still greater numbers have perished in the service of commerce. The looms and forges of Britain could not continue to work, and famine would stalk through her cities, did not her ships bear abroad the manufactures

of her artisans to every clime. It is to the sailor we owe it that the cottons of Manchester, and the cutlery of Birmingham reach even the wigwams of our western Indians. Literature employs and needs the seaman, and the scholar beyond the Alleghanies studies books that were purchased for him in the book-fairs of Germany, and brought across the sea by the adventurous mariner. And look to the home, and see how many of its delicacies, and luxuries, and adornments are brought to us from abroad by the sailor's skill and enterprize. And our agriculture needs his aid. The grains of the North, and the cotton of the South would find little vent, were not the swift ships ready to bear them to a market. They have served the church also. By them the Pilgrim Fathers reached a refuge on these shores, and found a home. By them the missionary has been wafted to his station in the heathen world. As a people we are under special obligations to the art and enterprise of the navigator. We are a nation of emigrants. The land we occupy was discovered and colonised by the aid of the mariner. The seaman has, then, been employed in our service. And as far as he was our servant, doing our work, we were bound to care for his well-being; and if he perished in our service, it was surely our duty to enquire whether he perished in any degree by our fault. The ten commandments describe the duties of the employer as well as those of the parent. Care for the servant as well as the child was one of the lessons of Sinai. And though literally the servant named in the Decalogue might be only the servant of the household, not he who does service for us at a distance; yet the spirit of these commandments is not to be confined by so close and literal an interpretation. When our Savior was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he pointed the enquirer to the remote and alien Samaritan. All whom we can reach, and all whom we use in service, mediate or immediate, we should seek to benefit, as far as our power and influence extend.

3. Others of those buried in the waters have lost their lives *in defence* of those upon the shore. In the last of our wars with the mother country, the navy was regarded as the right arm of our defence, under God, from the foreign foe. And so it has been with other lands. Their possessions, their liberties, their families and homes, have been protected by the deaths of those whom they have never known, but who expired, fighting their battles, leagues away, on the deep sea. Are no obligations imposed on us, in behalf of those who have thus befriended us, and in behalf of their successors and associates? Can a nation claim the praise of common honesty or gratitude, who neglect the moral and spiritual interests of these their defenders?

4. Let us reflect, also, on the fact, that many of those who have perished on the waters will be found to have perished *through the neglect* of those living on shore. We allude not merely to negligence in providing the necessary helps for the navigator. The Government, that should leave the shoals and reefs in its harbors unmarked by buoys, and that, along a line of frequented but dangerous sea-coast, should rear no light-houses, would be held guilty of the death of all shipwrecked

in consequence. But may there not be other classes of neglect equally or yet more fatal? The parent who has neglected to govern and instruct his child, until that child, impatient of all restraint, rushes away to the sea as a last refuge, and there sinks, a victim to the sailor's sufferings or the sailor's vices, can scarce meet, with composure, that child in the day when the sea gives up its dead. Or if, as a community, or as churches, we shut our eyes to the miseries of the sick and friendless seaman, or to the vices and oppressions by which he is often ruined for time and eternity, shall we be clear in the day when inquisition is made for blood? No, unless the church does her full duty, or in other words, reaches in her efforts the measure of her full ability, for the spiritual benefit of the seaman, her neglect must be chargeable upon her. Now, in the Savior's description of the condemnation of sinners at the last day, it will be observed, that he selects instances, not of sins of commission, but of sins of omission, as destroying the world. "In as much as *ye did it not*," is the ground of the doom pronounced. May not the perishing sailor take up most of the items of that sentence, and charge them home upon many of the professed disciples of Christ? Neither by influence, nor prayers, nor alms, did they relieve his temporal and spiritual destitution, when hungry, or thirsty, or sick, or naked, or in prison. And far as this neglect operated to form the habits that hastened his death, and led, perhaps, to his eternal ruin, so far it cannot be desirable to think of meeting him again, among those who shall rise in the last day from the ocean depths, to stand with us before the judgment seat.

5. Many, we remark lastly, of the dead of the sea will be found to have been victims to *the sins* of those upon shore. Those who have perished in unjust wars waged upon that element, will they have no quarrel of blood against the rulers that sent them forth? The statesmen, the blunders or the crimes of whose policy the waters have long concealed, must one day face those who have been slaughtered by their recklessness. How many of the victims over whom the dark blue sea rolls its waters have perished, year by year, in the nefarious slave trade. Such is the large proportion of the miserable children of Africa who die on the voyage, that, along the ordinary course of the slave ship from the eastern shores of Africa to our own continent, the deep must be strewn, and the bottom of the sea, at some portions of the way, paved with the remains of those who have been torn from their country and home, by the orders or connivance of the slave-trader, to perish on the ocean. In the day of the resurrection that galaxy of skeletons will rise; and the voice of wailing and accusation, stilled for centuries beneath the waters, will be lifted up to be stilled no more forever. And so it may be said of every other form of wickedness, of which those that sail in our ships are rendered the instruments or the victims. The keeper of the dram shop, or the brothel, where the sailor is taught to forget God and harden himself in iniquity, will not find it a light thing in that great day of retribution, to encounter those whom he made his prey. The seaman may not have died on the premises of his tempter,

in drunken riot; but out upon the far ocean he may have carried the habits there acquired, and died, the victim of intemperance, or profligacy, in a climate far removed from that where he was first lessoned in the ways of ruin, sinking perhaps in a shipwreck caused as many shipwrecks have been caused, by the intoxication of the commander or his crew. But the sea does not contain all the victims among its sons, who have thus been destroyed by the vices learned of the landsman. Many a sailor thus corrupted has perished on shore in a drunken broil, or pined away in some foreign hospital, or ended his days in a prison. Human laws seized not on those who first ensnared him; but will divine laws be equally indulgent, or equally remiss? The literature of the shore will be called to account for its influence on the character and well-being of the seaman. The song writer, who, perhaps, a hungry and unprincipled scribbler, penned his doggrel lines in some garret, little careful except as to the compensation he should earn, the dirty pence that were to pay for his rhymes, will one day be made to answer for the influence that went forth from him to those who shouted his verses, in the night watch, on the far sea, or perchance upon some heathen shore. The infidel, who may have sat in elegant and lettered ease, preparing his attacks upon the Bible and the Savior, thought little, probably, but of the fame and influence he should win upon the shore. But the seeds of death which he scattered may have been wafted whither he never thought to trace them. And in that day of retribution, he may be made to lament his own influence on the rude seaman whom he has hardened in blasphemy and impiety; and who has sported with objections derived by him at the second hand or third hand from such writers, whilst he figured amongst his illiterate and admiring companions, as the tarred Voltaire or Paine of the forecastle and the round top, the merriest and boldest scoffer of the crew.

The meeting, then, of the dead of the land with the dead of the sea will be one of dread solemnity, because of the ties of kindred and influence that bound them together,—and because multitudes of those buried in the deep died in the service of the landsman, or in his defence, many by his neglect, and many as the victims of the varied wickedness in which he had instructed, hardened, or employed them. Those who have been allied in sin, and accomplices in transgression, will find it one of the elements of their future torment, to be associated together in the scenes of the last judgment, and in those scenes which lie beyond that day. The animosity, revenge, and hate of the unregenerate heart, then released from all restraint, and exasperated by despair, will find vent; and rage uncontrolled through the sinner's long eternity of wo.

In conclusion, let us dwell on some of the practical results of the theme we have considered.

1. The dead shall rise, all shall rise, and together. From the land and from the sea, wherever the hand of violence, or the rage of the elements have scattered human dust, shall it be reclaimed. And we rise to give account. We rise to be judged. If, my hearers, we

would anticipate that judgment, we might, as the apostle assures us, escape it, "for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." * If feeling our sins, we do, as penitents, confess and forsake them, and flee to Christ and implore the Spirit, the dawn of that day will bring to us no terrors, and the sound of that trump be the welcome summons to a higher degree of blessedness. Cleansed in the Savior's blood, renewed by the Spirit, and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, we may in that day stand accepted, confident, and fearless. But, out of Christ, judgment will be damnation.

2. If the re-appearance from the seas of the sinner, who perished in his sins, be a thought full of terror; is there not, on the other hand, joy in the anticipation of greeting those who have fallen asleep in Christ, but whose bones found no rest beneath the clods of the valley, and whose remains have been reserved under the waters until that day, while, over their undistinguished resting-place, old ocean with all its billows has for centuries pealed its stormy anthem? Then to see them freed from decay, and restored to the friends in Christ who had loved and bewailed them—this will be joy. Ensure, christian parent, the conversion of your sea-faring child, and then, whatever may betide him, it shall be well. His body may rest as safely amid coral and seaweed as in the church-yard; and his soul fly as swiftly to the bosom of Christ from the midst of engulphing waters, as from a death-bed, attended by all the watchfulness and all the sympathy of weeping friends.

3. This community especially owes a debt to that class of men, who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters. The providence of God seems to indicate that our city is yet to become the Tyre of this western world. Some have estimated the seamen who yearly visit our port at more than seventy thousand, and suppose the average number constantly in our harbor to be from three to five thousand. Contributing as they do to the comforts and prosperity of every home, and guarding as in time of war, they do this commercial metropolis, do they not demand and deserve a still increasing share in our sympathies and aid?

4. It is, again, by no means the policy of the church to overlook so influential a class, as is that of our sea-faring brethren. They are in the path of our missionaries to the heathen. If converted, they might be amongst their most efficient coadjutors, as, whilst unconverted, they are among the most embarrassing hindrances the missionary must encounter. They have, it should be also remembered, in their keeping, the highways of the earth, along which travel its literature, its commerce, and its freedom. What would be thought of the statesmanship or patriotism of the man who, in time of war, should propose surrendering to the enemy all the roads and bridges of the land, in hopes of retaining possession of the rest of the territory? The mere proposal would be regarded as combining folly the most absurd, and

* 1 Cor. xi. 31.

treason the most disastrous. Yet what else is the church doing, if she relinquish the sea-faring class to the influence of sin and to the will of the destroyer of souls? She would be proposing virtually a most ruinous truce with satan, when resigning these to his unresisted control, and offering to abandon to his keeping the keepers of the highways of the nations.

5. While humbled in the review of her past negligence, and in the sense of present deficiencies, as to her labors for the seaman, the church has yet cause for devout thankfulness in the much that has recently been done for the souls of those who go down to the sea in ships, and in the perceptible change that has already been wrought in the character of this long neglected class of our fellow-citizens and fellow-immortals. God has poured out his spirit even on the incipient and uncertain efforts of his people; and from many a cabin and forecastle the voice of prayer even now ascends, and on many a deck the words of this salvation are read. "Let us not be weary in well-doing."

6. And now, lastly, we ask each of you: In that day, when earth and sea shall meet heaven in the judgment, where do *you* propose to stand? Among the saved, or the lost—the holy, or the sinful—at the right hand of the Judge, or at his left? Purposes of partial reformation or of future repentance cannot save you. Christ is now waiting to be gracious. He who will at last appear as the Judge, now comes as the Redeemer. He is now an Advocate; soon he will be the Avenger. Heaven stoops to win you. Hell rises to allure and destroy you. Oh, yield not to satan. Reject not Christ; for the Judge is at the door. And not this soul only of yours, but this body also must live—must live forever: and can you wish it to live in endless, hopeless misery? A throbbing brow, or an aching tooth, are now sufficient to embitter all the enjoyments of life. What will it be when the whole body is cast into torment? Can you desire to meet your impenitent friends, to spend an eternity together in growing hate and mutual recrimination—to face your pious friends, a godly father, or a praying mother, and catch your last glance of hope, your last sight of happiness, as you see them mounting to glory, whilst you sink yourselves into the sea of fire—the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever and ever?

SERMON CCCXLIV.

BY REV. BARON STOW,

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RELIGION OUR LIFE.

"It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."—DEUT. xxxii. 47.

NOTHING is more common than for men to insist upon the superlative importance of their own particular theory, business, or profession. Whatsoever is connected with ourselves, we are very apt to overrate, while the interests and affairs of others, we are likely in the same proportion to undervalue. This is the spirit of the world; this is human nature *as it is*.

In a great multitude of minds, this principle is made the basis of judgment respecting the work of the Christian minister. When we labor to dissuade our hearers from sinful deeds and pleasures, and urge the superior claims and comforts of religion, we are regarded as actuated by this common selfishness;—as attaching special importance to faith, repentance, hope, and a holy life, merely because, as professed disciples and teachers of Christianity, we feel in such subjects a peculiar interest. We are often considered as acting *professionally*—consistently enough, perhaps—and yet only *professionally*—and as, therefore, liable to over-estimate the value of our avowed object. Hence the stress which we lay upon the belief of gospel doctrine, and the practice of gospel precept, is frequently deemed to be disproportionate and extravagant, and many feel themselves at liberty to make such abatement from the pressing demands of our message, as may best suit their own convenience.

But, allowing that this professional ultraism is the common fault of selfish humanity, and allowing also that the occupants of the pulpit are personally the subjects of the universal frailty of our race—selfishness—is it not possible that the religion which we recommend is exempt from the application of a rule which may belong to other cases, and that when we declare it to be above all things important,

we utter only the *words of truth and soberness*, from which no deduction is allowable? If the Bible be true—and it remains to be proved that it is not true—then personal religion is the one thing needful, and our reasonings, and pleadings, and beseechings, and warnings, come not under the head of overheated enthusiasm; and the strongest language we can utter, and the most vigorous action we can employ, are not only justified but imperiously demanded.

The passage before us will amply sustain me in my position, and bear me out in urging you, one and all, to *seek* FIRST *the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* It is the language of Moses, a man of extraordinary learning, experience, and practical wisdom; and it is the more worthy of consideration from the fact that it was uttered at the advanced age of one hundred and twenty years, and near the conclusion of a well-spent life. He had long been the guide and instructor of Israel; had participated in their joys and sorrows, their dangers and deliverances, and had officiated between them and Jehovah as a subordinate mediator, typical, in some respects, of the ONE MEDIATOR—THE MAN CHRIST JESUS. Through him had the God of their fathers communicated his will to the people, and through him had the confessions and desires of the people been spread before God in the clouded mount. He has now arrived with his migratory host in the vicinity of the Promised Land, and he takes occasion to address the people most tenderly and faithfully upon subjects of the deepest interest to their future welfare. He speaks with a fervor and an unction that show how profoundly he feels his responsibleness to God, and how earnest is his solicitude for the spiritual good of his beloved charge. It was his *farewell discourse;* and no sooner was it concluded, than God commanded him to ascend mount Nebo, look at the long-sought Canaan, and die. He addressed his flock no more, except to impart his final blessing. This was soon done, and God took him to his reward.

This, therefore, is the language of a man who stood, and who knew that he stood on the border of two worlds. He understood and felt what he said. He spoke of the value of religion; and as he looked back on time, and forward into eternity, he testified to its importance as beyond all comparison:—*It is not a vain thing for you, because it is* YOUR LIFE.

I. *It is* NOT *a vain thing.* This it would be very easy to show, for its truth is confirmed by the testimony of all scripture and of all Christian experience. But the very terms of the negative imply a strong affirmation. If I say of a thing that it is not empty, I mean that it contains something. If I say that it is not worthless, I mean that it is valuable. And I use the negative form of expression to give the greater emphasis to an affirmative proposition. So when I say that to be a Christian *is not a vain thing*, I mean to be understood, and doubtless am understood as saying that it is positively excellent and desirable. To possess the Christian's heart and the Christian's hope

to love God supremely, and feel a spirit of charity towards all mankind, is not an imaginary, but a real good; not a shadow, but a substance; not an exterior show, but an internal solidity; not a matter of indifference, but of absolute necessity. No consideration in the universe is so important to you as the salvation of your soul. No question involves so much of your real interest, as this oft-repeated but grievously neglected one, Are you a Christian?

II. *It* is *your life*. Strong as is the implication of the negative, the affirmative is infinitely stronger. How significant and emphatic the expression—*It is* YOUR LIFE. The convalescent invalid says of a particular medicine, "It is my life,"—meaning that it has afforded essential relief, and is restoring his health. The literary man says of his books, "They are my life,"—implying that they are indispensable to his comfort, improvement, and usefulness. So when we affirm that the religion which we recommend, *is your life*, we use the words with a similar meaning, and yet with a meaning that is infinitely more accordant with truth. We would fain impress upon your minds the conviction, that *to you* this religion is more important than anything else within the range of human or superhuman conception. To your well-being, as a moral and an accountable agent, it is indispensable. It involves all that is really valuable in time and in eternity. *It is your life.* Measure the import of the expression—*your life!* Said satan—and well he knew—*All that a man hath will he give for* HIS LIFE. The religion of Jesus Christ is *your life*, and when you come to view it as such, you will surrender everything else for its sake. What would not each of the ill-fated Lexington's company, or the Pulaski's, or the Albion's company, have given, in their fatal hour, for the means of escape from a watery grave—for something, no matter what, which they might have embraced as *their life*, and by the help of which they might have been restored to their homes and their kindred? And in the dread scene of the world's conflagration, or even in the hour of death, who of my impenitent hearers will not count the religion of the Bible as of infinite worth, and mourn that it cannot then be secured? Of the few that escaped from those wrecks, who did not value, as above all price, the means of preservation;—who would have sold upon any terms the plank, the settee, the cotton bale, or the life-preserver, that buoyed him up, and bore him drifting away from the scene of ruin? "Part with *this!* It is my *life!* All earth can offer me no equivalent for it!" And where is the believer, as he considers what religion has done for him, and is now doing for him, and promises still to do for him both in time and in eternity, who would not feel that in relinquishing his hold upon the religion of Christ, he was letting go his all? *It is not a vain thing for me,* declares every Christian under the whole heaven, *because it is* MY LIFE. On this I lay my soul; I cling to it as a life-buoy. Part with this, and I am lost forever!

When, however, I assert, upon divine authority, that personal reli-

gion is indispensable, I do not mean to say that you *cannot* disregard and neglect it. I know full well that you *can*, for, while I wonder *how* you can, I see that many of you *do* neglect it as if it were *a vain thing*, rather than *your life*. But I know also that you cannot neglect it without displeasing God, and incurring to yourselves infinite damage. You may indeed dispense with faith, and prayer, and a holy life; but the results will be that you must dispense also with all the blessedness of present piety, and that God will surely dispense with your presence in heaven. You *may*, if you choose, despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance, not realizing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to that repentance which is unto salvation; but you cannot do it without treasuring unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Whether you shall or shall not embrace the *great salvation*, is not a question which you may decide either way with equal innocence or equal safety. The religion of the Lord Jesus is *your life;* irreligion is *your death*. The Great Alternative is, Repentance or Perdition. Welcome the Savior to your heart, and you are happy forever. Reject him, and it will cost you everlasting damnation.

When we say that personal religion *is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life*, we mean that it is essential

1. *To your peace of mind.*

Of the wicked, God himself has said, that to them *there is no peace*. True as are all his declarations, he has made no other statement that is sustained by so many corroborative facts. You who are impenitent have never enjoyed one half hour of true peace of mind such as you would venture to say upon a dying bed was *happiness*. Seldom, during your waking hours;—never, except when your consciences are lulled into slumber by the stupefying influence of some narcotic error, or of sensual indulgence, or of absorbing worldliness—never are you free from uncomfortable apprehensions touching the soul's futurity. You may labor to disbelieve the Bible; but, even if you succeed, the difficulty is not remedied. Infidelity, in none of its forms, can furnish a substitute to pacify the restless spirit. Should you, blinded by the sophistry of the senses, persuade yourself that the word of God does not mean what it says with respect to the character and the end of the wicked, you gain nothing even on the score of genuine comfort. There is still in your bosom *the worm that dieth not*, the original and eternal cause of inquietude and wo. And just in proportion to your zeal and activity in defending such error, do we discover evidence of your inward restlessness and dissatisfaction. Through the very means by which you would convince us that you are happy, you betray the proofs of a misery that devours the heart with a vulture's appetite. A mind unreconciled to God is any where and every where a miserable mind. Engage in any pursuit, travel to any country, mingle in any society, the occasion of unhappiness remains. It is unpacified conscience—unrenewed moral nature—a part and parcel of yourself. One of your own number, more frank than his fellows, has confessed it:—

"What exile from himself can flee?
To foreign lands and realms remote,
Still, still pursues where'er I be,
The blight of life—the demon—Thought."

Your only alternative, aside from submission to the gospel, is to lay that harrassing disturber, conscience, asleep by the use of some spiritual soporific, such as satan and his agents are ever ready to prescribe and to furnish. This has sometimes been done, and the soul has not aroused from its night-shade influence, until the body has been wrapped in its shroud, and the soul itself girded with eternal fire! But not unfrequently has conscience, touched by the electric power of the Spirit of God, started from its forced dormancy, and rung through the soul the tocsin of alarm, until there have stood up before the sinner the hideous spectres of wasted years, and murdered privileges, and he has shuddered, like a leaf of autumn, "with a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Have *you* not moments, when thoughts of eternity and retribution will intrude unbidden and unwelcome, causing every joy to pall upon the senses, every dream of pleasure to vanish, every hope to wither, and overspreading earth and heaven with a gloom that, like Egyptian darkness, may be felt? You wish that you had never been born, and, could you be sure that death would annihilate the thinking principle, you would seek death as a refuge from the lashings of the inward executioner.

Now, as the appointed remedy of this deep-seated and otherwise incurable evil of the soul, the religion of Jesus *is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.* By reconciliation to God, through the mediation of the atoning Savior, you can obtain "the peace that passeth all understanding"—peace of mind—and in no other way can you obtain it. I speak not at random; I speak upon Scripture authority; I speak from personal experience; I speak with the concurrent testimony of all Christians on earth and in heaven. Upon this subject you are not competent judges, for you have made trial of nothing but the world, and worldly expedients. We have tried both the world and religion, and, upon our credit for veracity, and as believers in eternal retribution, we assure you that, being *in Christ new creatures*, and the possession of "good hope through grace," are productive of the only peace that is worthy of the name. "Peace I leave with you," says the faithful Redeemer, "*my* peace I give unto you; *not* as the world giveth, give I unto you."

O yes, dear hearer, if there be a difference between the dread of hell and the hope of heaven, between the corrosions of conscious guilt and the soothing assurance of affectionate forgiveness, between the maniac pleasures of sin and the rational satisfactions of piety, then is the Christian happier than the impenitent sinner.

Appeals to men's *interests* upon this subject, I am well aware, avail but little. No man becomes a Christian solely under the influence of such motives. But as the example of Moses, and of the prophets and apostles, and even of our Lord Jesus Christ, will justify such appeals,

I hesitate not to place before you in all their strength the inducements you have to abandon sin and *perfect holiness in the fear of God.* It is for your interest as a being susceptible of pleasure and pain, to accept the overtures of the gospel message. In no other way can you insure mental tranquillity, or escape the anguish of an irritated and upbraiding conscience. "The way of transgressors is hard." "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." So long as you cherish sin in your bosom, *it will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder.* But put it away, and take to your heart the gospel that *bringeth salvation,* and you shall know what is meant by *peace in believing.* Its balmy influence shall be to the soul emollient, healthful and invigorating, fitting it for duty on earth and felicity in heaven.

Need I say more to convince you that religion *is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life?* I add, then, that it is essential

2. *To your support under the trials of life.*

You are called, in the providence of God, to suffer some painful bereavement. Your parents are smitten down, and you are left an orphan, homeless and friendless, in a cold and selfish world. Or the child which God has given you, and which your affections have embraced with idolatrous strength, droops and withers in your arms, and you are obliged to lay it away with the sleeping dead. Or the companion of your life is suddenly torn from your side, and in all the desolateness of widowhood, like the vine, whose supporting oak has been riven by heaven's lightning, you lie prostrate and helpless, with your thousand divided tendrils quivering and bleeding. What, in such circumstances, what can you do without the consolations of the Christian religion? If the mines of both hemispheres were to empty their glittering treasures at your feet, would you feel indemnified for your loss? What can the whole world do for your relief? Can you mention any thing connected with earth that has power to sooth your anguish, or allay the surges of a mind that is now emphatically *like the troubled sea which cannot rest?* Go, ye worldlings, to the recently bereaved;—to her whose poignant affliction has drawn around her the sympathy of thousands;—go and offer all ye have to give, and you only inflame the griefs which need to be assuaged. She asks not that you would restore her dead to life; she asks not that you recover from ocean's depths the cold, blanched form of the loved one who left her and never returned;—but she asks that you will point her to a Friend in whose ear she can tell all her sorrows, and not be mocked with the plea of inability to relieve;—she asks for the outstretching of an arm on which she can lean, assured that it will sustain her confiding spirit;—she asks for the interposition of one who can say to the billowy deep of her soul, *peace, be still,* and there shall be *a great calm.* Ye children of sense and earthliness! Ye votaries of a Christless philosophy! Ye repudiators of the Bible! What can ye do to alleviate the woes of the stricken one? Stand off with your folly, and give place to the religion of Him who came *to bind up the broken hearted, to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the*

spirit of heaviness;—of Him who says, *Leave thy fatherless children and let thy widows trust in me;*—of Him who can so rectify the views and feelings that the sufferer shall cheerfully and serenely say, *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* The Christian religion, cordially embraced, administers precisely the needed solace. And this it does, not by restoring the lost—not by destroying the sensibility of natural affection—but by producing such a spirit of pious resignation to the divine will as stanches the streaming grief, and binds up and heals the wound. The sovereignty of God is acknowledged, his wisdom is seen and adored, and submission is felt to his ways as distinguished by equity and benevolence. The great principle, *God is love*, is distinctly recognized, and upon that principle, as upon eternal rock, the soul rests its whole weight with all its cares and burdens.

Yes, in the trials of life, however mysterious or overwhelming, the religion of Christ comes with relief that nothing else supplies, and it is always the relief which is needed. Easily could I conduct you to scenes where you would witness conclusive exhibitions of this truth—where you would see the infinite difference between the power of religion and the power of the world to sustain and cheer under similar calamities. Oh, yes, there is in Gilead a balm for the wounded spirit; there is a Physician acquainted with your miseries, and able and willing to relieve. *If any man thirst*, says the sympathizing Savior, *let him come unto me and drink. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest.* Casting yourself, perishing sinner, upon his mercy, you have a Savior who will not mock your confidence,—a friend who will not forsake you in adversity. If your way shall lie *through much tribulation*, his promise is, *As thy day shall thy strength be.*

O how true that religion *is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.* Let me add that it is essential

3. *To your fitness for the eternal world.*

It is appointed unto men once to die. That body, on which you dote so fondly, and for the feeding and clothing of which, your time and faculties are so largely engrossed, shall return to the earth as it was. That soul, now so criminally and cruelly neglected, *shall return to God who gave it.* In the hour of dissolution, when time shall close, and eternity open, if you feel anything, you will feel the need of something more than human to bear you up and cheer you in the gloomy vale. In that trying hour the believer can say, *my heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Yea through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.* Yes, and he can triumphantly challenge the king of terrors; *O death where is thy sting?* But if you are not then a Christian, you you will find the passage dreary and comfortless beyond description, And e're the friends that weep around you shall have decided whether the soul has actually taken its departure, that soul will have made its appearance before a holy God, and received its sentence to depart until the final trump shall call it up for judgment.

The word of God is very explicit touching the preparation necessary to your admission into heaven. Depraved in nature, ye must be born again, or ye *cannot* see the kingdom of God. Guilty of actual transgression, ye must repent or perish. Condemned already, with the wrath of God abiding upon you, ye must be pardoned and restored to divine favor, or be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.* Great changes must take place in both the character and condition of your soul, or heaven's gates will be closed against you.

> "None shall obtain admittance there
> But followers of the Lamb."

In this respect, then, religion *is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life*—pre-eminently and emphatically YOUR LIFE. Only by embracing the religion of Christ can these needful changes be effectuated. *Dead in trespasses and sins,* you are *quickened* by the Spirit of God and made a *new creature;* your heart throbs with new principles, new affections, new desires, and you walk forth *in newness of life.* Penitent for your sins, condemning yourself and justifying God, you are freely forgiven for Jesus' sake. Sensible of your unworthiness to appear before God, you are accepted upon the ground of the Savior's merits and made welcome to all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. He who bled on the cross, and now intercedes above, *is made unto you Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,* so that you are *complete* in him.

Thus personally and graciously interested in the Lord Jesus, you meet death with holy intrepidity, and rise with triumph to join the assembly around the throne, and help to swell the hallelujah that fills the eternal regions—*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain—Hosanna in the highest!*

I speak as to wise men. Is a religion that can do all this for you, *a vain thing?* Is that *a vain thing* which alone can give you peace of conscience; which alone can support you under the trials of life; which alone can light up the valley over which death stretches his gloomy shadow; which alone can fit you for a place in the paradise above, and raise you to happy and eternal companionship with saints, and seraphs, and God? *It is your life.* Without it, you are undone, now and forever.

A SHORT SERMON.

"Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts ix: 6.

"A great many persons *think* they wish to enter God's service, when they really do not. Ascertain first then, whether you desire to serve God, by considering what that service is.

1. It will in the first place, require you to give up at once, every thing which he has forbidden. There are certain known and open sins condemned by his moral law, which must be entirely and for ever abandoned or you cannot be his. One man allows himself certain practices in his dealings with others which his conscience secretly tells him are wrong, and he is unwilling to give them up. His heart clings to them, and they stand like an impassable wall, between his soul and salvation. Another is engaged in a calling, which is ruinous to the souls and bodies of his fellow men. A third violates the Sabbath, by bringing into it secretly, his business or his pleasure, and a fourth indulges in habits which his own conscience and the word of God distinctly condemn. They all perhaps think they wish to become Christians,—and often say that they do not know how to begin! They read the Bible, and perhaps offer cold and formal prayers, and even take their place among religious inquirers, but the way is dark before them. They find no peace or happiness in piety, but it is just because they are not willing to renounce the pleasures of sin. He therefore, who thinks he wishes to give himself up to God, should look carefully within, examine faithfully his conduct and character, and see whether there is nothing which he knows is wrong, and which he is nevertheless unwilling to abandon;—if there is, it is vain to think that he wishes to become a Christian. He prefers sin.

2. It is not only necessary to renounce what God has forbidden, but to devote yourself to the work of *doing what he requires.* A large

portion of the human race seem to have no idea of the design with which they were created. Hence they seem fully satisfied with themselves if they are not doing any thing which can be shown to be positively in itself, wrong. They seem never to think of the guilt of neglecting the work which God has placed them here to do. A man, for example, will give himself up entirely to the pursuit of pleasure. His whole time is employed in finding or making enjoyments for himself. He is careful perhaps not to fall into any immorality, and then he says, what harm can there be in a little innocent amusement. He thinks those are fanatical who object to such a life as he leads. Mistaken man! God has placed you in this world, not to amuse yourself, but to do a great work for him, and the charge against you is not so much the intrinsic wickedness of what you do, as the guilt of neglecting what God has commanded you to do.

A husbandman employs laborers to work in his vineyard, but instead of entering faithfully upon their work, they sit down upon a green bank and spend their hours in idleness, or else engage together in some athletic game. One, more faithful than the rest, attends to his duty, and perhaps points the rest, occasionally, to the employer's neglected work, and warns them of his displeasure.

"What a narrow-minded, fanatical fellow is this!" says one in reply. "What harm can there be in a little innocent enjoyment?"

"None at all," answers another. "Our employer is a benevolent man. His object is our happiness, and he wishes us to use the opportunities for enjoyment which he puts into our hands. He cannot wish to interrupt our pleasures."

So saying they turned away from their faithful companion, and give themselves up again to their pleasures. Other laborers see the example of idleness and unfaithfulness which they set, and follow it; and they all quiet apprehension as to the future, by persuading themselves that their employer is too merciful a man even to dismiss them from his service, and thus bring them and their innocent families to want and suffering.

'Tis just so with men. God stations them in this world to accomplish certain purposes which he plainly marks out. We are commanded to devote our time and all our powers to the work of promoting holiness and happiness all around us, and of preparing ourselves and others for our final home. One man, neglecting these objects altogether, devotes himself entirely to the work of acquiring property, simply for the pleasure of feeling and saying that he possesses it. In this work he is entirely absorbed. He rises early and lies down late; he is industrious, and frugal, and watchful; but the object of all is simply the increasing of his stores. He spends his life in this work, never thinking of what God has given him to do in this world, or if he thinks of it, he has no intention of doing it. The unhappy man must find at last, that though there may be, in itself, no sin in acquiring property, there is great sin in spending a whole life in the entire neglect of the real business which God had assigned him.

If then, you think you desire to become a Christian, consider whether you are willing to do, in this world, the work which God has assigned to you, or whether you prefer employing yourself about some other. It is in vain to say that other employment is innocent, in itself. You cannot be God's servant without being willing to do *his* work. And what is that work? Why, that you should first study to improve your own character in holiness, and that you should endeavor to acquire and to preserve property and influence as a means of doing good to others,—of promoting the prosperity, and happiness, and welfare of your neighbors, and the community in which you dwell, relieving the sick and the suffering, and advancing the cause of universal knowledge, piety and happiness. Are you willing to engage in this work? If not, do not vainly imagine you wish to be a Christian.

3. One thing more is necessary. I have said you must be willing to abandon all sinful practices, and to engage at once in God's work. You must also be willing that your adherance to the cause of God and religion should be openly known. Many persons wish to come and make *secret* peace with God, because pride remonstrates against an open admission of his claims. But this will not do. You cannot in this way render your Maker that efficient service which his cause requires; and besides, since you have been openly in the wrong, it is right for him to insist upon your openly admitting it, and making your repentance as public as your sin.

Now these three things are most manifestly implied in entering God's service. To pretend to choose his service without being willing to do these things, is plainly absurd. Any one then can easily tell whether he does or does not wish to enter this service. Are you ready to abandon at once all known sin, and to engage in the work of co-operating with God, and to do it openly, so that your return to duty may be known. If you are willing, the return is easy. The great atonement for all your past sins has been made, and the way is entirely open for your coming at once to God and surrendering soul and body, time, talents, influence and property to his work. He will assuredly accept the surrender, and it is one which it is easy to make.

4. It must be made *deliberately* and *solemnly*. All its validity depends upon its being sincere and honest; but the more formal it is in manner, the better. The first great covenant which God made with the Hebrews was executed in writing, and deposited with solemn ceremony in a gilded box, which was carried with them in their wanderings for many years. So let the Christian now make his covenant with God. Let it be a deliberate and formal and solemn act. If he utters aloud in his hour of solitude, the words of consecration, the work will be more effectually done than if he breathes them in silence, and to reduce them to writing and sign them with his name, and then read them solemnly before God, will be better still. It should be done deliberately, as a most solemn and binding act. God will be a witness, and if you are sincere, he will be bound by it himself as your perpetual protector and friend. Such a covenant might be as follows.

COVENANT.

"Oh my Maker, I will henceforth have thee for my master, and I will be thy servant. I stop here, in my neglect of thy commands. I stop here in my life of irreligion and selfish pursuit of worldly good. I will now begin to serve thee. This body is thine; thou hast created it and preserved it, and hast given to it all its powers. I have used it thus far for my own purposes, but henceforth I will use it for thine. This intellect I surrender to thee. I have employed its powers in devising and executing my own selfish plans, but from this time it is sacred to the service of God. This wealth and this influence which thou hast given me, shall henceforth be devoted to the purposes for which they were bestowed. I will give myself to the work of doing good. I will seek my employment and my happiness in co-operating with thee in carrying forward thy plans, for removing suffering, and drawing men away from sin. Lord receive me as a servant and follower. Make me wholly thine own. Help me to begin immediately my new work, and to persevere in it to the end. Encourage and strengthen me. When difficulties and trials press about me, wilt thou sympathize with me and come to my help. When I shall stray again from duty, and forget this my solemn covenant with thee, restore my backsliding feet, and grant me forgiveness and peace. Watch over me to the end, and thus prepare me for a more faithful and a happier service in another world.

In thus coming to thee to commence a new life in thy service, all my hope for forgiveness for my past sins, and guidance and help for the future is in thine undeserved mercy, through Jesus Christ who died for me. I would be crucified with him, and thus bringing to a close my life of sin, I would henceforth live a new life 'by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'"

Now who is there, young or old, high or low, rich or poor, who does not perfectly understand what is meant by such a surrender of himself to God as this. There are doubtless many, who do not wish thus to enter into their Maker's service; they choose to continue in their own; but it is difficult to conceive how any one can say that he does not perfectly understand how to do this, if he is only inclined to do it, or can deny that entering thus into the service of God is the plain and unquestionable duty of every intelligent being whom he has formed. They therefore, who do not begin at once to serve their Maker, neglect their duty, not because they do not know how to do it, but because they *do not wish* to do it. They love better the pleasures of sin."

THE PRAYER OF THE DYING CHRISTIAN.

"Gently, my Savior, let me down
To slumber in the arms of death:
I rest my soul on Thee alone,
E'en till my last expiring breath.

Death's dreadful sting has lost its power:
A ransom'd sinner, sav'd by grace,
Lives but to die, and die no more,
Unveil'd to see thy blissful face.

Soon will the storm of life be o'er,
And I shall enter endless rest:
There shall I live to sin no more,
And bless thy name forever blest.

Dear Savior, let thy will be done;
Like yielding clay I humbly lie,
May every murmuring thought be gone,
Most peacefully resign'd to die."

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SERMON CCCXLV.

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FATHERS INVITED INTO THE ARK.

"Come thou and all thy house into the ark."—Genesis vii. 1.

Thus spake God to the patriarch Noah, at a most interesting and solemn crisis. For one hundred and twenty years, the inhabitants of the earth had been warned of coming wrath. Noah, by divine direction, had been engaged in preparing an *ark* for the salvation of all who would believe. His work was now completed, and but seven days yet remained, ere the Lord would break up the fountains of the great deep and open the windows of heaven, and sweep away every living thing from the face of all the earth.

The unbelieving world made light of this warning from heaven. They feared no flood. They desired no refuge from its desolating scourge. There stood the ark of God—an effectual covert from the gathering storm—soon to be closed up, by him that shutteth and no man openeth, and to bear off, upon the wide waste of waters, all that would remain among the living. And yet they would not enter.

At this moment of deep and solemn interest, when all things were fast preparing for the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, a voice from heaven breaks upon the patriarch's ear, saying "*Come* thou *and all thy house into the ark.*"

The command was addressed to the father of a family, and on the manner in which he received and treated it, depended his own salvation for time and for eternity, and on it, too, *might* depend the endless destiny of all his house.

The ark which Noah built, is an emblem of the ark which God has provided in the person of his Son, for the salvation of men from another deluge predicted in his word—a deluge, not of water, but of fire. And I shall consider the text *as the voice of God to* every father

OF A FAMILY *who has not entered the ark, Christ Jesus, saying unto him,* "*Come* THOU *and all thy house into the ark.*" And I shall offer some considerations to induce every such father to obey, immediately, this voice of God.

I. There is provision in the ark for thee and for all thy house.

You are not required, like Noah, to devote years of labor and sacrifice to preparing for yourself a refuge. The labor has been laid upon God's only son. The sacrifice has been paid in streams of his precious blood. The ark is built and furnished—all things are ready—the door thereof is yet open, and the Spirit and the bride say come. You have only to enter into this building of God, and you escape the indignation which cometh upon the ungodly. You have only to take your children by the hand and lead them in with you, and no evil shall befall *them*, henceforth and forever.

Myriads of households have already entered. There are the families of the patriarchs and of the martyrs, and of the whole army of the faithful. And see we not, in the midst of each, the happy *father*, who taught his children this way of life—whose counsels, whose prayers, and whose bright example brought them within these everlasting doors? With what joy does he look around upon his offspring now! In the eye of each is the peace of heaven. On the heart of each is the image of Jesus. And nothing shall ever separate them from a father's love. O, there are *many such* fathers encircling, with their offspring, the great white throne. And there are many more fast going up to join them. And yet *thou, father*, who art now without, and thy children with thee, there is yet room for thee and for all thine. This day the Savior calls, "Come, come *thou* and all thy house."

You need not stay without, and not a single child of thine need be excluded. Have you a son who is *hard-hearted* and perverse—whose life is crimsoned with guilt? Bring *him* in with thee. For the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Have you a son who is a *prodigal*—who has wasted his substance with riotous living, and is feeding upon husks and perishing with hunger? Bring *him* in with thee. For his Heavenly Father will fall upon his neck and kiss him, and bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Have you *little* children? O, bring *them* in with thee. For the Savior of the world saith, "Suffer them to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Gather *all* thy children with thee into this ark of God, and safely shall you be wafted together into the haven of eternal rest. The ties which bind you so sweetly to each other shall be strengthened; and the kind offices which you perform for each other shall be still higher sources of enjoyment. The happiness you feel in each other's presence—every avenue of parental and filial affection shall be enlarged without measure. Storms may gather over you and rage around you, but not a hair of your heads shall be injured. Thunders may roll and lightnings blaze, but you shall hear in them nought but the voice of your common Father, and see in them nought but the

exceeding brightness of his glory. The earth may quake, the mountains be removed, and every ocean and every sea become a desert—the stars of heaven may be quenched in eternal night, the pillars thereof fall, and one broad flame of unquenchable fire sweep over the whole creation of God, but *you* and *your children* shall come forth out of the vast ruin, borne upward in the hand of Omnipotence, rejoicing with joy unspeakable, that your redemption is accomplished!

II. There is no safety for you or for your children out of the ark.

As God liveth, there is a storm coming which will empty the earth of all her inhabitants. Not one, of all the race of men, can abide the day of its coming, or flee from before its fury. No cavern so deep—no mountain top so high—no island of the ocean so remote as to afford a shelter. No combination of human power—no mighty effort of all the angels of heaven could avert its desolation. There is no safety from it but in the ark of God.

With the children of your love around you, you *may* now feel that you are happy, although you and they are yet without the ark. But your happiness is imperfect; it is of short duration; and it is all at the mercy of God's forbearance. Let the heavens grow dark, the rains descend and the floods come, and it vanisheth like a bubble. The gathering of your children around you, as you and they stand without, with the door shut and the ark borne off upon the rolling flood, will not make you or them happy. *They* will feel that, however kind and indulgent you have been to them, you have neglected their immortal welfare, and that, by listening to your instructions and following your example, they are ruined forever. And *you* will feel that the distress and anguish which are coming upon them, which cannot be mitigated and which will never end, your unfaithfulness has occasioned. O, you will wish, then, to put these objects of your love far from you, and to blot from the registry of Omniscience the day that recorded you as their father!

You may be the most kind-hearted and affectionate of earthly parents, and yet, if you are remaining with your children out of the ark which God has prepared for you, you are doing them an injury which, it *may* be, nothing you *can* hereafter do will be able to repair. Out of Christ, they are unsafe. Out of Christ, no being on earth, and none in heaven, can insure them safety for a single moment. The tender affection which you feel for them, should drive sleep from your eyes and slumber from your eyelids, until you have done all that you *can* do to bring them within the pale of everlasting mercy. You may provide for them the best of instruction—the choicest of earthly comforts; you may secure for them the friendship of the good, the wise, and the great; you may cast upon their prospects in life many a golden beam, and cause their hearts to beat high with expectation. But what of all this can reach beyond the grave? What of all this meets the wants of the soul, or opens the avenues of everlasting life? Be-

maining with your children out of Christ, you and they are exposed to all the terrors that are written for the enemies of God. Remaining with your children out of Christ, you and they can have no comforter in trouble—no hope in death—no God forever. Remaining with your chrildren out of Christ, you and they must, eventually, become alienated from each other—that which is now the object of your tender affection must become the object of your absolute abhorrence—that which now enkindles hope must give intensity to the agonies of despair!

O, there is *reason* why God out of heaven should call to thee, to-day, saying, "Come *thou* and all thy house into the ark;" for out of it, there *is* no safety for thee or thine. No guardian angels, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, watch around *thy* dwelling. No gracious Savior, attracted to thy threshold by thy song of praise, and the accents of thy broken and contrite heart, unsheaths the sword of his omnipotence for *thy* defence. No covenant-keeping God has pledged the faithfulness of his throne, that when *thou* walkest through the fire he will be with thee, and through the waters they shall not overflow thee. Thy house is not a house of prayer. The mercy that spares thee is all uncovenanted. The promises of God reach not to thee or thine. And it is not for *thy* sake that he blesses thee or thine. His *earth* yields thee her increase, but to reprove thee of thine ingratitude. His *heavens* smile upon thee, but to remind thee of the benignity of him whom thou dost not love. His *air* breathes upon thee, but to roll upon thee a mountain's weight of obligation to consecrate thyself and all thou hast to him, in whose hand thy breath is. And the *immortal beings*, whom he has drawn around thee and taught to call thee, *father*, place their affections on thee, and rejoice to do thy pleasure, only to teach thee with what feelings thou shouldest look upon the character and do the will of thy father and their father who is in heaven. None of these things are—no earthly blessings can be sources of permanent enjoyment. To be happy, even in the affections of your family, and in view of your and their immortal destination, and to be assured that this happiness will be any thing but momentary in its duration, you must obey the voice of God, and come, *thou* and all thy house, into the ark.

III. You should enter the ark of God, and seek to bring all your children in with you, not only because *your* salvation depends upon it, but because it may be indispensable to *theirs*.

1. Your children, that are out of the ark of God, are unwilling to believe that there is a storm gathering, or that the ground on which they stand will be swept by the overwhelming tide. They are unwilling to believe that the ark is a place of safety, or that there are not other plans equally safe, and altogether more desirable. Now, who could *convince* them of their error, like *you*, their father? What teacher could reason with them so irresistibly? What minister plead with them so affectionately? *You*, they respect. You, they love. To-

you, they are bound by chords which bind them to none else. *Your* counsels they will not utterly disregard. *Your* persuasions they cannot absolutely resist. Should you call them around you, and take them by the hand, and out of the fullness of your heart, tell them their condition, point out to them their danger, and beg them to flee from the wrath to come; should you tell them, how precious the Saviour is to *you*—how anxious you are to meet them all in heaven, and how painful is the thought of an eternal separation between you and them at the judgment seat of Christ, think you they would hear it unmoved? Can you say, by experience, that they would? Have you ever made the experiment? Have you ever told your children that they had sinned against God—that they were justly condemned to eternal death—that they must repent of all their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or perish forever? Have you ever told them of the deceitfulness and the desperate depravity of their hearts—of the holiness of God—of the bliss of heaven and of the pains of hell? Have you ever cautioned them against resisting the Holy Ghost? Have you ever admonished them that their life is a vapor, and entreated them to do with their might the great work which God has given them to do? Have you *done* this, and done it *repeatedly*, and done it in all the *fervor* of parental affection? And why not? You have taught your children how they should feel toward their fellow men, and how they should conduct themselves in their presence. Why not teach them how they should feel towards God, and what reverence they should render to him? You have taught them how to live in this world, why not teach them how to live forever? The body you have been solicitous to nurture and to adorn. O, why treat with so much indifference the undying soul? Had *your* instructions—your entreaties been added to those which your children have already received from others, they *might*, long since, have been heirs of life. It *may be*, that all the argument and the persuasion, which teachers and ministers and parents united can bring to bear upon the hearts and consciences of your children, will be but just able to bring them within the kingdom of God; and that, if you substract yours, all other influences will fail, and they will die in their sins. IT MAY BE! Will you not, then, reason with them, and plead with them, by all the ties which bind them to your souls? Do you say, that you are not prepared to do this?—that you have no heart to do it? Well, this is a melancholy confession. Not prepared—no heart to speak to your dear child about his having a part in the book of life! This is the very reason why we urge upon you the command in the text. "Come THOU—*and* all thy house—into the ark." We wish to have you prepared. We wish you to enter the ark to-day, that you may teach your children to enter it also. We wish you to seek the Lord while he may be found, that your children may find him also.

2. Again; your children need an *almighty arm* thrown around them, to gather them out of the snares and temptations of the world, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They need to have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them, that they may be convinced of sin and

of a judgment to come and be humbled at the foot of the cross. And who shall come with strong *supplications* and with tears to the mercy seat for this blessing, if not their *father?* If a child of yours were condemned to be executed on the morrow, who could be expected to plead with the executive of the state in his behalf like his own father? And who can be expected to wrestle at the throne of grace for the *endless* life of your offspring, like him, whose image they bear and to whom they are dearer than his own heart's blood! O, it is *parental prayer*, that has had such power with God in perpetuating the blessings of his grace upon the seed of the righteous. It is parental prayer, that has brought multitudes of children and youth to the feet of Jesus. It is parental prayer, that has often been answered on earth, to the praise of the riches of God's grace, long after the spirit that had breathed it out before heaven had gone to its everlasting rest. But, *thou*, who art a *father*, and art thyself out of the ark of safety, hast thou prayed for thy children? Hast thou *asked* of God that thou *mightest* meet them all in heaven? Hast thou taken them into thy closet, and told them the desires of thy heart, and lifted up the voice of thy supplication over them? Hast thou brought them around the family altar, and there taught *them* to offer incense unto God? And *why* hast thou not *done* it? Thou hast not hesitated to ask favors for thy children of thy fellow-men. Why hast thou asked none for them of thy God? *Hadst* thou prayed with them, and prayed *for* them, each morning and evening, from their infancy up to this hour; and hadst thou often taken them with thee into thy secret chamber, thy Father, who seeth in secret, might, long since, have rewarded thee openly. He might have given thee to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. It *may be*, that all the instructions, and warnings, and admonitions, which they have hitherto received, have failed of bringing them to the Redeemer, because you have never asked God's blessing on these means of grace. It *may be*, that all the means of grace which shall hereafter be used with them, will be utterly powerless, because there will not be added to these influences the influence of your prayers. It *may be*, that a single word of prayer, ascending from your lips, will be the means, in God's hands, of prostrating them in penitence before his throne. If so, your entering the ark of God, and entering it speedily, may be connected with blessings on your offspring, great as God's mercy can bestow, and lasting as the pillars of his throne.

3. Again; your children need the influence of *example*, as well as of instruction and prayer, to induce them to seek first the kingdom of heaven. And whose example can exert such an influence upon them as that of their father? How can you *expect* them to flee from the wrath to come, when you, by your example, teach them that there is no coming wrath. How can you expect that *they* will trust themselves to the mercy of Christ, while you, by your conduct, teach them that *you* feel no need of that mercy. *You* live without Christ. You neglect religion. You cast off fear and restrain prayer. Is it any wonder

if your children do the same. If Noah had refused to enter the ark when God commanded him, think ye his children would have entered it? If their father had felt that there was no flood of waters coming upon the earth, think ye they would have been looking for windows in heaven? If their father had felt that it was hazardous to intrust his life in that frail bark, think ye they would have launched forth in it upon the angry deep? And if *you* disregard the calls of mercy, and resist the Holy Ghost, and die unreconciled to God, what reason have you to expect that your dear children will listen to those calls, and yield their hearts to that influence, and die in hope of a blessed immortality? You wish them to die thus. We know that you do, for your's is the heart of a father. But, what hope have you that they will? What a hindrance has your evil example been to them already! How often, when the ministers of Christ have told them of their danger, and held up before them the bleeding victim of the cross, and urged them to look at it and live forever, how often have they said within themselves, "If these things *were so*, my father would not utterly disregard them. He perceives no danger. He does not believe that he must repent or perish—that he must be born again or be forever excluded from the kingdom of heaven. He does not believe it, and why should I?" And is not this good logic? And do you not respect the intellect of your child for it, unacquainted, as he yet is, with the mysterious workings of human depravity? O, how much instruction falls as water upon the ground—how much divine influence is as ineffectual as if exerted upon a rock, and solely, because the lesson taught by parental example is so unlike that which is written in the book of God. It *may be*, that if the *example* of that father, who is now unreconciled to God, had been added to the other influences which have been exerted upon his children, they would, one and all, have become the children of the Most High. It *may be*, that if the example of that father is *not* brought to bear upon his children, all the preaching, and the prayers, and the influences of the Divine Spirit that will ever reach them, will come very far short of humbling them at the foot of the cross. It *may be*, that the example of that father alone, if no other means were ever to be repeated, would be sufficient, under God, to turn the feet of all his children unto the wisdom of the just. If so, his entering the ark of God, and entering without delay, may be of more consequence to them than to come into possession of all the worlds that Omnipotence has made.

And wilt thou, who art a father, in view of these considerations, hesitate whether thou shalt enter the ark of God? If thou hast no mercy upon thine own soul, wilt thou have none upon the souls of thy children? They are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh. They are entrusted to thy care. Their Maker and thine has enjoined it upon thee, to take care of their souls. They *need* your most faithful instructions. They need your most fervent prayers. They need the influence of your pious example. And will you not regard their *ne-*

cessities? You would not deny them the meat that perisheth. Will you deny them that which endureth unto everlasting life? You would not refuse to ask a physician to come to their relief, if they were lying upon the bed of death. You could not find it in your heart to do it. And will you refuse to send up one request, in their behalf, to the great Physician of souls? You are a father. You look upon the face of your offspring with tenderness and affection. You can be moved by a regard to their everlasting well being. Will you not, this day, then, gather around you those objects of your love, whose eternal welfare you have hitherto neglected, and open before them the book of the testimony and read to them of Jesus and the resurrection. Will you not tell them of their ruined state—of a Savior's dying love—of an accepted time and a day of salvation? *Ought* you not to do it? Can you neglect it, and your own conscience not reproach you? Should you do it, would it not be likely to arrest their attention and make a deep impression on their hearts? Would it not be likely to have more influence with them than all the sermons they have ever heard?

And will you not do more than this? Will you not, this day, take those children with you into your closet, and bend your knee before your Maker, and confess to him, in their presence, that you have neglected your duty—neglected your own soul and theirs—that you have not instructed them, nor warned them, nor prayed for them—but have been leading them, by your example, in the broad road of death—that it is infinite mercy that has spared you, and permitted you to come with them now to the throne of grace, and that, henceforth, it shall be your great work to train them up for heaven. *Ought* you not do this? Can you neglect it, and your own conscience not upbraid you? Would not the influence of it, on your own soul and on the souls of your children, be such as you would delight to have come to your remembrance in the great day? You *ought* to do all this, and more. God has enjoined it upon you, and the obligation can never be diminished—can never be cast off. You have become, in the providence of God, a father. And the responsibilities involved in this relation, you must carry with you to your grave and to the judgment seat of God.

If you are not prepared to do all your duties to your household, seek that preparation without delay. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. You may seek him now, while he yet invites you to his mercy seat. You may find him the Lord God, gracious and merciful. You may go from the altar of prayer and self-consecration, *prepared* to begin every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring. And why not do it? Why wait? Time does not wait, but bears thee and thine on to the judgment. The angel of death does not wait, but flies swiftly, to execute his commission. The Holy Spirit will not wait, but may, ere long, depart and return no more. And you and your children, *where are you then?* Will you longer bar the Savior from your heart and thus exclude him from your house? Will you neither enter his kingdom yourself, nor suffer your dear children to enter? You *ought* not to trifle

thus with your obligations to God, nor with those tender ties which bind you to your household. God has constituted you a minister of his grace, in your own house. And however unmindful you may have been of your ministry—however neglectful of its duties, you are held responsible to the great tribunal, for making your house a house of prayer and for teaching all within it, by your precepts and your example, to offer incense holy and acceptable unto God. No blessing can you be instrumental of conferring upon your household, that may be compared with this. Nothing can you do for them, that you will think of with more satisfaction, as you pass on your pilgrimage—nothing that will give you more consolation in your dying moments, or fill your soul and theirs with purer, intenser joy, as you greet each other in the presence of your final judge!

What must be the distress of a father, summoned to the death bed of an *unconverted son*, there to feel, that his neglected duties and his ruinous example have hardened his own son in impenitency, and blotted out his hope of heaven! Now, the afflicted father wrings his hands, and weeps, and prays, and warns, and watches for some signal of a broken heart. But the son regards not his entreaties. They have come *too late.* As he lived, so he dies. And over the mortal body, from which the immortal spirit has gone up to God—not there to dwell—the father, convulsed with anguish, cries, "O, my son, *my son*, MY SON! Would God I had died for thee! O, my son, *my son*, MY SON!" Would you never know, by your own experience, the agonies which rend that father's heart, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come* THOU *and all thy house into the ark.*

Or, think of an *unconverted father* laid, at an unexpected moment, on his dying bed. His children come around him. But what thorns does it plant in his pillow, what gloom does it bring over his entrance into the world of spirits, to reflect that he has neglected their salvation! He has uttered no warning voice. He has breathed no unutterable desire to heaven. The morning and the evening incense has never gone up from his dwelling to God. And now it is *too late.* All that he *can* now do for his impenitent children, is just to give them one parting admonition. And then he must leave them, in a world of temptation and sin, to go away and give up his account. O, the anguish of waking up, at such a moment as this, to the recollection of neglected duties—an abused offspring—a hopeless eternity!—Would you never know this anguish, by your own experience, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come* THOU *and all thy house into the ark.*

But there are scenes more heart-rending than these—scenes *beyond* a death-bed. The *unfaithful father* must meet his ruined children *at the bar of God.* O, what an interview that! The children of his loins—the objects of his tenderest affection, upbraid him, and say, "Thou wast our father. To thee was committed the care of our souls.

But thou caredst not for them. We never heard thee speak to us of repentance or of a Savior's cross—of this judgment bar or of the weeping and wailing that now await us. *Our souls are lost*—and LOST through your neglect! Hadst thou been faithful to us, we might now have stood together at Christ's right hand. *We* might have sung the song of Moses and the Lamb." O, what must be the condition of a father, thus doomed, through everlasting ages, to hear the imprecations and reproaches of his own offspring, and to have them all echoed back from his own upbraiding conscience? Would you be saved from such a doom, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come* THOU *and all thy house into the ark.*

Or turn, for a moment, to a different scene. Methinks I see, at the right hand of the eternal throne, a *father in glory*, and all his children are glorified spirits around him. They rise up and with united voice call him blessed. "We remember," say they, "our dwelling on yonder earth, consecrated by thy piety and thy prayers, as the house of God and the gate of heaven. There, thou didst watch over our infancy, and guide us up to manhood. We knelt by thy side at the altar of prayer, and walked by thy side to the assembly of the saints. Thy faithful counsels, thine affectionate solicitude, thy fervent prayers, brought down upon us the blessing of our God. And now, with our robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, we stand upon these heights of Zion to acknowledge thee, our father, as the instrument, under God, of our immortal joy." What tongue can describe, what heart conceive the blessedness of such a father! Would you make that blessedness your own, begin, O, *begin* every duty, which you owe to your own soul and to the souls of your offspring, to-day. *Come* THOU *and all thy house into the ark.* Fathers, I speak to you. And I speak in behalf of your own soul and the souls of your dear children. Judge ye what I say.

SERMON CCCXLVI.

(AN OUTLINE.*)

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WHY SHOULD THE WORK CEASE?

"And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"—Nehemiah vi. 3.

As Nehemiah, with his faithful Jews, "builded the wall of the city," he was invited by Sanballat and others, to a consultation upon public matters. Their designs, he had occasion to know, were unfriendly. Perhaps they intended, after alluring him into the plain, to lay violent hands upon him. They certainly meant to put a stop to the repairs. And the very least evil that could result, would be the suspension of the work during his absence.

So he declines a conference. At once, Sanballat repeats the proposal; but with as little success. Four different times, messengers come soliciting an interview: and in each instance, Nehemiah replies, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

In applying the text to ourselves, as engaged in a revival of religion, I propose the following inquiries.

I. In what respects is this *a great work?*

It is such, as it requires great effort—demands the power of God—is carried on against great opposition, a mighty adversary, with his servants and abettors—reaps blessed results, the quickening of christians, the conversion of sinners, and the praise of divine grace—and,

* The Editor having heard the author preach to his own people from this outline, requested a copy for publication. It was during a revival, in which more than one hundred souls have been hopefully converted, in connection almost exclusively with the united efforts of the pastor and church, which still continues after three months progress.

because perverted or unimproved, contributes to painful results, the hardening of the hearts and the aggravated ruin of multitudes.

II. In what respects are WE doing this great work?

We are not to forget that the efficiency is God's. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. It is one of the chief delights of the christian in a revival, to *feel*, and to *say*, "Lo, THIS IS OUR GOD!" To exalt the Holy Spirit! To magnify His office, and His work.

Yet in some important respects, WE do this work. For, *we use the means of its advancement.*

We preach the word,—frequently, plainly, and with adaptation to the season, and to the numerous classes which the season occasions. In the inquiry-meeting, and from house to house, we confer with the troubled soul; explain to him the way of God more fully; expose his errors; answer his excuses; resolve his doubts; reduce to order his confused thoughts and mingled feelings; and, divesting the subject in hand of all that does not properly belong to it, simplify his duty, and enforce it upon his conscience.

We bring the unconverted to the house of God—all who love their souls can do this—and endeavor to place them under all the means of grace. By evincing an affectionate interest, we encourage them to seek their salvation. We take them by the hand, when impressed, point them to the Savior, and show that "the elder brother" can favor the return and pardon of "the prodigal."

We pray for them. This we do, in public and in secret; in their presence, and also where they hear it not, and when they know it not.

III. What, in the course of a revival, is to be guarded against, as likely to cause the work to cease?

PAST SUCCESS. Christians count the converted; pronounce on the power and extent of the work; congratulate themselves and each other; and are satisfied.

UNBELIEF. The idea obtains, that God will not save many in so small a congregation; or in a congregation where the proportion of the unconverted is so small; or without more preaching; or without more powerful or exciting preaching; or with the measures employed. As many have been converted, as in the circumstances, could be expected.

DISCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO REMAIN UNCONVERTED. There are but few of them; or they are too hardened; or they are as yet little impressed; or they have passed through many revivals; or they are fast bound in error; or they make bitter opposition; or they plead so many excuses.

WEARINESS, from continuing in an uniform and absorbing work. The spirit—not merely because the flesh is weak—grows restless. A change is desired: some new excitement, or at least some relaxation.

A DIMINUTION OF ATTENDANCE UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD. The influence of the mere presence of each member of the church, is mighty. The influence of his absence, mightier still. His absence, if unnecessary, discourages the preacher, and is a comment upon the work of God which sinners easily read. Yet a dropping off, in the attendance of professors of religion, is not uncommon. Many of them *begin* the revival-season well. They come to the *first* prayer-meetings. They hear the *first* sermons. Their goodness is a morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away.

WORLDLY BUSINESS. It is a hard lesson for christians to learn that *their business* is God's, if such that they have a right to pursue it; and that *God's work* is theirs. They are not the proprietors of their worldly concerns, but only agents. If the Proprietor *calls us off*, and by his providence and Spirit points us to the revival, as the scene of chief labor for the present, there we must be. While such is the indication, there we must stay:—only caring meanwhile that *His other business* takes no harm. When the members of the church "cannot afford time from business," the work is likely to cease.

WORLDLY COMPANY. When christians go again for their happiness, into circles where religion is not ascendant, or court or admit the attentions of the irreligious and the gay—it is saying decisively that we have no further occasion for the company of the Holy Spirit.

HABITUAL AND EASILY BESETTING SINS. The first step, on engaging in a revival, is to part with these. If they are resumed, the work ceases. Too often, the christian has not *slain* his sins; nor was it his calculation to slay them. He only *laid them by*; to take them up, perhaps with new zest.

OUR SELFISH ENDS ANSWERED. Numbers and strength have been added to the church. My own *house* has shared in the blessing. I have received a new impulse: it has been a season of comfort to my soul; my doubts and darkness are scattered; my backslidings healed. My child, my husband, or my parent has been saved.

These are blessed results. But ends no higher, no larger, are selfish; and if we rest when they are gained, the work will cease. Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, but FOR MY HOLY NAME'S SAKE.

A VAGUE IMPRESSION THAT THE WORK WILL GO ON. If the idea obtains, that the preaching is good; the preacher wise and successful; the church humble and prayerful; the congregation deeply moved; the Spirit powerfully operating;—and therefore, irrespectively of the part individuals may act, the work will advance, it is likely to cease.

PRAYER INTERMITTED. Exalt God less; recognize, *realize* less, your entire dependence on the Almighty Spirit; let prayer flag in the closet, prayer-meetings become thin and lifeless, and the conviction less fixed and less *felt*, that this work advances only as GOD IS HERE,—and the work will cease: IT HAS CEASED.

IV. Why should this work NOT CEASE?

The work HONORS GOD. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. It is in transforming the sinful heart, and and in training his child for his service and kingdom, that God best displays his glory. When, by the outpouring of his Spirit, he multiplies these results, as the drops of dew, or the leaves of spring, it is the brightest view of grace, that earth, or heaven, knows.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD. He speaks much of times of visitation, and of refreshing from his presence: and insists that his people shall improve them. "A present God is all our strength, and all our joy and hope." Wo to them when I depart from them!

THE PROMISES OF GOD. Many, varied, full, sincere, exceeding great and precious. Often tested, and never known to fail.

THE NUMBER ALREADY CONVERTED. That this has been considerable, should only prompt to greater desire and effort. It is so in other things: to have, is to desire more,—success gives birth to enterprise. Why not in the case of the best of blessings:—and on the part of their Giver, untold resources, a warm heart, and the most encouraging offers?

THE ESTABLISHING OF CONVERTS. No school for them like a revival; the revival in which they were born. Let them learn here, the elements of truth, the guidance and witness of the Spirit, the source of their strength, the blessedness of bringing others to Jesus. Let him that heareth, say Come. The conversion of the convert is not his last step, but his first. Let these happy influences remain about him, till he shall have taken many a manly stride.

IT IS A DELIGHTFUL WORK. It is drawing from the richest fount of joy in the sanctified heart; since "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It is mingling with our friends in the scene of their overflowing love, their first real happiness. It is sympathy, in desire and employment and the delights of success, with the Savior!

THE INFLUENCE OF THIS WORK, ON OTHER CHURCHES. It is a token for good, a hold upon heaven, when the Spirit is operating in a neighboring church. The hope is, that the happy contagion will reach us: that God, who has come so nigh, will favor our Zion. Praying ones are encouraged to cry, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for us? Bless us, even us also, O our Father!

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL. With its immortal nature; its deep affections; its ever enlarging capacities for bliss, or for wo; its ransom, no less than "the precious blood of Christ,"—the soul is to be converted, or lost; and that soon!

THE NUMBER OF THE UNCONVERTED. Many are "anxious"; many evince earlier stages of sensibility; many are unawakened.

THE CHARACTER OF THE UNCONVERTED. It may be that they are "the hardened," "those who have passed through many revivals," and "the opposers." They have indeed withstood powerful influences, these many days. But shall the work for this reason cease, and the Spirit be withdrawn, and these be left to *certain death?*

THE NEARNESS of MANY TO OURSELVES. By blood, and by strong

affection, they are dear to us. We love them, as our own souls. All the close relationships of life are here. And can we deliberately concur in separations which now exist; and which, remaining to the close of this work, are so likely to exist forever? Could we all agree to-day, *where* this revival shall stop,—which of our houses it shall not enter?

THE INFLUENCE THAT THE CONVERSION OF A SOUL MAY SET IN MOTION. The conversion of a layman, Page, is supposed to have resulted in the direct conversion of one hundred others. To how many more, God blessed his influence, in life, in death, and now, when being dead, he yet speaketh, will not be known on earth. How many more might have been converted through the labors of that useful man, but for his early departure, it is impossible to conjecture. But suppose his labors blessed in the saving of one hundred,—nay of fifty souls. Suppose each one of those, or half of them, possessed of his zeal and his faith, and instrumental in the conversion, each one of many more. And they, in their turn; and so on, till time shall end,—"the circles widening as they recede."

Suppose a young man converted, who becomes educated, and preaches the gospel. In connection with his labors, it pleases God to save many hundreds. Of these, many inherit the spirit of self-denying labor for the cause of the Redeemer. Not a few become preachers: some, missionaries of the cross. Many a mother, among those converts, now begins to train her children for heaven. Many of the youth, in after life are parents, and train their children for God. Who can calculate the influence of the conversion of that young man? And if one such trophy may be secured to the Savior in this revival; or one person saved, who shall accomplish a fraction of that good,—why should the work cease?

Finally, if the work ceases, it is that WE "GO DOWN" AGAIN INTO CARELESSNESS AND SIN. The close of a revival is as sad, as its commencement is happy. The church laying down their watch, and relaxing their effort and prayer, and the irreligious falling into indifference, must compensate the adversary it would seem for the inroads he has suffered. Shall this be? Can we bear the thought?

V. How may we secure the continuance of the work?

Continue all that we have done, to invite the presence of the Spirit; and to promote the work. Abandon all that may have hindered its more powerful progress. Cherish your interest in the revival. Be present amid its moving scenes. Learn within those walls, how little is the world; how valuable is the soul; how great is God! Be humble; be watchful; be solemn; be prayerful.

If you have withheld your presence, and your hearty co-operation; repent. *Now* throw yourself into the work. Show that you have enough religion, enough sympathy with the Savior, enough regard for the souls of men, to concur in the saving operations of the Spirit.

If you cannot show this:—if *it is not so:* then inquire into your own standing before God. Inquire whether there is not the first and best of reasons, why you, you should enter into this work: whether this revival may not have been sent to rescue *one at least* from a state as fearful as avowed impenitence!

It only remains, therefore, that we press onward. I seem to hear that cheering order, Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. Tire not. Let your trust be in God. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse. Lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left. Thus the work shall not cease. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him."

SERMON CCCXLVII.

EXCUSES FOR NOT BEING A CHRISTIAN.

"I pray thee have me excused."—Luke xiv: 18.

"MANY and various are the excuses which men plead for neglecting religion when its importance is pressed on their attention. All have some excuse, but among them all there is not one which is valid now, or which will prove well grounded in the day of judgment. Some of the excuses which are urged are indeed very deceptive. It is not uncommon to hear individuals say "I wish I were a christian, but I do not know how to become one." Impossible. To wish to be a christian, and actually to be one, are the same thing. Still many persons use this language, "I wish I were a christian but do not know how to become one;" and this discourse is designed to show you, my hearer, not how to gratify your supposed wish, but to show you that if you are not a christian, you have, in fact, no wish to become one. There are reasons why you have not; which, though they are sometimes expressed, oftener lie coiled up secretly in the heart, and are only perceived when they are distinctly pointed out. Some of these will be brought to view in this discourse; and the hearer, while he considers them, should carefully inquire whether he is not himself under the influence of them; so as, in fact, not to wish to be a christian; so that, though he may wish for the safety and the happiness which he imagines piety would bring, he does not really wish for the reign of piety itself in his heart.

I. *I am too young to attend to religion.*—Some have a secret feeling, that they are so young, that it is not necessary for them to attend to

religion. You may regard religion as very suitable for those who are advanced in life, and especially for the aged and the dying; but the world and its pleasures appear so bright and alluring, that you think it hardly reasonable to expect that you will give them up at present. You cannot attend to religion now. But, consider carefully, for a moment, the import of this language. What is it to *attend to religion?* It is to obey God. God commands you to remember now your Creator, in the days of your youth; to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He commandeth all men every where to repent; and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. These commands are not addressed to the old exclusively, but to all, and *more especially* to the young; because there are peculiar promises and encouragements held out to those who seek God early. To *attend to religion* in a proper manner, is nothing more or less than to obey these commands. To neglect religion, is to disobey these commands. Those, who repent of their sins, believe in Christ, give him their hearts, and devote themselves to his service—those, and those only, attend to religion in a manner that is acceptable to God. This is religion, and there is nothing else that deserves the name. Those, on the contrary, neglect religion, who live impenitent, slight the invitations of Christ, pursue the pleasures of the world, doing more to please themselves and their fellow-men, than they do to please God.

Now look at your excuse. You may perhaps understand it better. *Too young to attend to religion;*—that is, too young to obey the God that made you, and on whom you are dependent for every breath you draw. Too young to love and serve the God of heaven! Are you not, on the other hand, too young to be without religion—to disobey God—to set yourselves in opposition to the Most High—to say to the Lord Jesus, who died to redeem you,—I will not have this man to reign over me? Is it well for the young and tender youth to assume an attitude like this? God says, 'My son—my daughter, give me thine heart.' When does he command you to do this? to-morrow?—or next week?—or next year?—or when you have arrived to old age? No,—he commands you to do it to-day. You cannot then neglect religion, without directly disobeying this command of the most high God. And does the circumstance that you are young, furnish a good reason why you should do this? Put your excuse into plain language, and see how it will sound. I am young,—therefore I will disobey God; I will set his authority at defiance; I will seek my happiness in the world, instead of seeking it in his service. And though the Savior, who has died for my redemption, follows me with his earnest and pressing invitations, I will slight them all; I will neglect his great salvation.—Would you be willing deliberately to adopt language like this? But this is the real import of your language, when you say you are too young to attend to religion.

Consider again; are you too young to die? Have you never

seen any one, no older than yourself, borne to the cold grave? Should your soul this night be required of you, would you dare to make the plea at the bar, to which you would be summoned, that you thought yourself too young to attend to religion? Is this excuse a good one?

II. *Pressure of worldly cares.*—Others who say they wish to become Christians, secretly excuse themselves on account of the pressure of worldly cares. This is in reality their excuse for neglecting religion. Among those, who were bidden to the great supper, one said, I have bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And many are excusing themselves on no better ground, for not accepting the invitation of Christ. *They have not time to attend to religion.*—Do look at this excuse. What is religion? It is to love God with all the heart. Will it take any more time to love God than it does to hate him? What is necessary in order that you may become reconciled to God? To repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And how much time is necessary to do this? How long did it take the Jailer, or the Eunuch, or Saul of Tarsus to believe in Christ? How long ought it to take to make up your mind, whether you will obey God or disobey him? whether you will have your portion in heaven or in hell? And when you have made the decision, will it take any longer to perform the ordinary duties of life under the influence of Christian feeling, than it will without that influence? Will you not be able to do as much for your own comfort and that of those around you, if cheered by the hope that your sins are forgiven, and that God is your friend, as you are while oppressed with the consciousness that the wrath of God is abiding on you, and that you have no portion secured beyond the grave? But suppose that a due attention to the subject of religion were to interfere, in some degree, with your worldly interests and pursuits; which does Christ tell you to seek first? Which does your own conscience tell you, is most valuable and important? Would you think the man acted wisely, who, by busying himself to save a single dollar, should loose the opportunity of securing a large estate? And what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

III. *Interference of religion with favorite pursuits.*—Another excuse, often felt, though not very often expressed, is an apprehension that religion will render it necessary to abandon some favorite pleasure or pursuit. Most people, whose minds are enlightened by divine truth, understand very well what is, and what is not, consistent with Christian character. But so long as they make no pretensions to religion, they seem to feel no scruple in doing things, which they would be the first to condemn, if done by a professing Christian. They have many worldly pleasures, which they know it would be very unseemly for a disciple of Christ to indulge; or, they are governed by principles in their modes of doing business, which the Gospel plainly con-

demns; and as they have such a regard for consistency of character, that they cannot think of becoming Christians, without giving up whatever the spirit of the Gospel condemns, they are unwilling to be closely pressed upon the subject. They had rather keep it at a distance: and when an awakened conscience brings it home to them, they drive away their convictions, and close their eyes to the truth. But, my friend, religion will only prohibit you from doing that which is wrong; and will not conscience tell you that you are wishing for a continued license to sin? Does it not also tell you that a day of reckoning will come?—and can it be wise to go on swelling the amount that you will then have to settle?

In connexion with this, I would observe that pride is a very frequent obstacle, that prevents many from giving up their hearts to God. I presume there are those among my hearers, who will know what I mean. A feeling of shame would come over you, to have your thoughtless companions and associates look upon you, and know that you were thinking seriously about the welfare of your soul. And, therefore, if you have feelings on the subject, you try to conceal them, and will perhaps even deny that you have any. But is it best to be ashamed of Christ, when he has declared that of such he will be ashamed in the kingdom of his Father?

> "Ashamed of Jesus?—yes you may,
> When you've no sins to wash away;
> No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
> No fear to quell—no soul to save."

IV. *Inconsistencies of professing Christians.*—Another very common feeling, which reconciles the heart to a life of sin, is that many persons who profess religion, do not live consistently. My heart is pained within me when I think how grievously the Savior is often wounded in the house of his friends; how little conformity they exhibit to the character of Him, whom they profess to make their pattern, and how little concern they manifest for the eternal welfare of those, with whom they daily associate. And whether many of them have not deceived themselves with a name to live, while they are dead in sins, is a serious question, which must soon be decided.—But is the blessed Savior himself, on this account, any the less worthy of your love and confidence? Is this a reason why you should crucify him afresh by your unbelief? And especially, is this a reason why you should expose your immortal soul to eternal wretchedness and despair? Will you once think of offering it as an excuse, when you stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that his professed disciples, whom you knew on earth, did not live as they ought? Or, will it help to dispel the gloom of your dark abode, to have associated with you, those whom you had seen numbered with the professing people of God? Look at the subject candidly, and tell me if you think this a good excuse.

V. *Conversion, the work of God.*—Perhaps you have a secret

feeling that it must be the work of God; he must work repentance and faith in you, or you cannot repent and believe; and this in such a sense as to free you from the responsibility and guilt of sin. Suppose a person were exposed to death, in a situation where he had a full view of his danger, and say that it was utterly out of his power to relieve himself, while there was an entire uncertainty whether relief would be afforded from any other quarter. Would he be able to maintain an air of indifference to his condition? Would he eat and drink with his usual relish through the day, and lie down and slumber quietly at night? Can any, then, really believe that they are in this fearful state, exposed to the eternal wrath of God, entirely unable to relieve themselves, and lying under a fearful uncertainty whether any other being will afford them help; while at the same time they appear wholly indifferent to their situation, and are perhaps amusing themselves with the trifles that surround them? Do they really believe their condition is such as is here supposed? Or, are they only wishing to quiet their consciences in sin, and avail themselves of this as a plausible excuse? Would you say that the more wicked a man is, the more excusable he is? Yourself being judge, a strong inclination to do wrong, furnishes no good excuse for doing wrong. There is one plain consideration that should satisfy us on this point. God holds man responsible for his conduct, and shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Will you think of urging your depraved inclination as an excuse at the bar of Jehovah? Certainly not. Then do not let it operate to keep you from accepting Christ now.

VI. *Influence of earthly friends.*—Others are prevented from accepting Christ by the influence of earthly friends. 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' But will Christ consider the influence of earthly friends a sufficient excuse for not accepting his invitation? Let his own words decide. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.' Yes, we are required to forsake wife and children, if need be, for the sake of being his disciples.—But some will plead the *opposition* of friends, if friends they can be called, as an obstacle to their embracing religion. But your friends cannot control your thoughts. They may abridge your privileges, but they cannot prevent your giving your heart to God, and loving him with your whole soul. And do not forget that your obligations to no earthly friend can bear any comparison with those which you are under to Christ.

VII. *Irksome duties.*—Others are in heart unwilling to become Christians, because they know there are duties connected with the profession of christianity, which appear to them exceedingly difficult and irksome. They therefore hesitate, and waver.—Do take up the subject in earnest. Some adopt a kind of half way course; indulge a hope that they have become the disciples of Christ, but decline the responsibility that belongs to a public profession of religion; and be-

cause they do not render themselves responsible to a body of their fellow-men, feel at liberty to omit those duties, which appear most forbidding to them. It is not my province to say that people never get to heaven in this way; but I do feel bound to repeat what Christ said when on earth;—*He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

VIII. *Want of conviction of sin.*—Others think they cannot accept the invitation of Christ, because they think they have not experienced such powerful convictions as they think needful, before it is proper for them to enjoy the consolations of religion. What would you think of the condemned criminal, who should refuse to comply with the term of offered pardon, though perfectly easy and just, because in his own view, he did not feel so penitent as he ought, for the offence he had committed? Do you feel sensible that you are guilty in the sight of God, that you are justly condemned by his law, that there is no way of escape but by the atoning blood of Christ? And do you believe that Christ stands ready and willing to save you? Why, then, do you not commit yourself entirely into his hands? Do you still say you have not felt your guilt so much as you ought? Think one moment. If God has been so kind as to show you your situation without that overwhelming sense of guilt, and those distressing stings of conscience, which some experience, is it a proper requital of his kindness to stand up and obstinately refuse to obey him? He commands you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do it now; and how strangely will it sound for you to plead at last, that you saw your danger, and perfectly understood what a remedy was provided, but you did not apply unto it, because you did not feel so much as you supposed you ought.

IX. *More convenient season.*—Others secretly think they shall have, some time or other, a more convenient season than the present. This is not expressed, but the heart feels it, and it betrays at once the fact, that the individual does not wish to be a servant of God. He postpones entering his service, as an evil which must be put off as long as possible, and submitted to at last, only when it can no longer be postponed. My hearer, is this your state of mind? You do not mean to die impenitent. You are not calculating on the horrors of a dying bed, uncheered by the presence of the Savior; but you are not ready to repent now. You expect a more convenient season. A more convenient season?—Why?—When your weight of guilt has accumulated, your heart hardened, your conscience seared, and the patience of God well nigh exhausted by your long delay? Do these things render it *more convenient* to effect a reconciliation with God?"

"To day attend, is wisdom's voice;
To-morrow, folly cries;—
And still to-morrow 'tis, when, oh,
To-day the sinner dies."

SERMON CCCXLVIII.

PRAYER A MEANS OF REVIVALS.

"O Lord, revive thy work."—Habakkuk, iii: 2.

Thus prayed the prophet Habakkuk for a revival of religion in ancient times. Thus should the people of God pray in every age, wherever religion languishes, and where there are souls to be saved. In the economy of redemption, God has made prayer a very important and indispensable means of revivals of religion.

"In order to offer that prayer which prevails with God,

I. Christians must *pray in humility.*

When they spread forth their supplicating hands to God, with the request that divine grace may enrich their hearts, that the consolations of religion may cheer their souls, that they may be useful in God's service; that Zion may be built up, sinners converted to God, and the whole earth filled with his knowledge and goodness: they should have a deep and affecting sense that they are utterly unworthy of such favors at the hand of God, utterly unworthy to be employed as the instruments of extending Christ's kingdom, and of saving souls from eternal ruin. They should feel that it is entirely of divine grace that they are permitted, by their prayers and exertions, to obtain these blessings for themselves or their fellow men. And this suggests,

II. That they should *pray in the name of Christ.*

They are so unworthy, so inefficient in themselves, so deserving of God's wrath, that they cannot hope that their prayers will be heard, or even that they can approach the Holy One, unless they come in the name of Him who has died for sinners, and who ever liveth to make intercession for his people. For Jesus has said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In the name of Christ then must they approach Jehovah, and through his merits expect every blessing which is bestowed in answer to prayer.

III. In prayer they must *seek the aid of God's word and spirit.*

In the Bible they may learn *what* they are to pray for, and *how* they are to pray. And they especially need the teachings of the Holy Spirit, by his gracious operations on the heart, that they may attain a devotional frame of mind, and a spirit of prayer, that they may be directed to pray for those things *which are agreeable to God's will,* that they may not hinder their own prayers by selfish motives, or by

being unprepared to receive the blessings for which they pray, and that they may be sustained in agonizing prayer, while they wrestle like Jacob, and prevail like Israel.

IV. They should *highly value those things for which they pray.*

Who would dare approach an earthly prince to request a mere trifle? They who approach the "King of Kings," should feel that they come with a weighty message; that their request is of high importance; that when they pray for the increased piety of themselves, or of other christians, and for the conversion of sinners, they are petitioning for favors which mortals could not purchase; that if their request is granted, the gain can be estimated by this only, that it is a charity worthy of a God of grace. They should feel this that they may be humble, fervent, and persevering in prayer, and that they may be prepared to receive, with gratitude, the gracious answer of their God.

V. They should be *very fervent in their prayers.*

Is it not true that the people of God often have so little feeling, ardor, and energy, so much coldness and indifference, so much unconcern whether God hears them or not, that their very prayer seems to invite a denial? Ah! this is not the way to reach heaven, and draw down blessings on perishing souls! "*The effectual fervent prayer* of the righteous man *availeth much.*" And christians who would offer *this* prayer for revivals, for the conversion of a sinner, must bring home the subject to their hearts in all its immense importance, till it lie a heavy burden on the soul; till their sympathies are enkindled, their anxieties excited, and their energies aroused; till they feel an awful and overwhelming responsibility resting upon them, as the instruments of salvation to others—that if faithful, souls will be saved, if unfaithful, *lost for ever!*—until they feel for perishing sinners that *restless agony of soul*, that shall go with them wherever they go, and abide with them wherever they abide; that shall steal away the refreshings of their food, and sleep, and all earthly enjoyments, that shall weigh down their spirits, and make them look into the bottomless pit, and behold sinners crowding upon its very verge!—that inexpressible agony which can find no relief, but in the throes and travailings of the second birth! When such prayers are offered, sinners are converted—God's work is revived:—"For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord?"

VI. They should *persevere in prayer.*

He who engages in an earthly enterprise in search of earthly good, is untiring in his pursuit till he gains the desire of his heart: and shall christians, who supplicate for heavenly, for eternal good, tire and faint? They should continue steadfastly and perseveringly in prayer, for God sometimes withholds for a season the gracious answer which he intends to give. He does it that his people may realize the value of what they ask, that they may more fully manifest their humility and fervor, their faith and submission, their determination to persevere,

and their zeal for his glory, and that they may be prepared to receive the answer of peace. When the answer is deferred, they should feel that their prayer may be hindered by something wrong, or something wanting, in their desires, or motives, or graces, or efforts; and while they should correct what is wrong, and supply what is lacking, they should persevere, though God seem to hear them not, still they should persevere till they gain their request; unless they have clear and unequivocal proof that they are praying for that which God intends not to bestow. How perseveringly did Elijah, on Mount Carmel, pray for rain, when his servant, sent to watch for the rising cloud, returned and said, "There is nothing." "Go again, *seven times*," said the holy seer, and *seven times* he poured out his soul in prayer, and obtained his request.

VII. In connection with their prayers, *christians should put forth those efforts through which the supplicated blessing is to be obtained.*

God works by means. Efforts are generally required by God of those who would obtain an answer to their prayers. Here many christians fail. Many pious parents, who feel and pray much for their children, it is feared, neglect those efforts which stand connected with the conversion of their children, and which would secure it, by the grace of God, if they were only only put forth! Many who feel a deep anxiety, and pray fervently for a revival, still neglect the means of Gods appointment—means, which if faithfully used, would procure a revival! Christians should understand and feel that however deep their anxiety, and fervent their prayers, they have no right to expect a revival without using those means which God has placed in their power. This is a point, which I fear, many christians do not fully understand. And this, I apprehend, unfolds one of the great secrets why many apparently fervent and persevering prayers for revivals, receive no answer from God. These prayers are inefficient, because their corresponding efforts are not put forth. To give all the scripture illustrations of the connexion between prayer and effort, would require a volume.

VIII. In their prayers they should have *a supreme regard to the glory of God.*

The glory of God should be preferred to all earthly good, and they should seek the spiritual good of themselves and others, in connexion with this glory.

IX. They should pray in faith. They should believe and trust unwaveringly in the promises of God: so that—

> "When his saints complain,
> It shan't be said that praying breath,
> Was ever spent in vain,"

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SERMON CCCXLIX.

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THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS; AS OPPOSED TO THE MODERN THEORY OF SECOND ADVENTISM.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—John xii. 32.

We have fallen on strange times. And yet not entirely strange; for ever since the melancholy disaster in Paradise, man has been prone to morbid excitements. The present is one of the points, in the wheels of revolution, at which this weakness of our fallen nature is very strongly developed. Not on one subject only, but on all, there is an impetuous rush of feeling, in which passion overleaps reason, and a fiery haste to *do*, prevents the calm pause to *think*. The mass of men seem now to be moved, not so much by the *intrinsic truth* and *importance* of subjects, as by the quantity and violence of *urgencies* with which they are pressed upon them. The most clamorous are the most influential. Such is the passion for *excitement*, that they who would take time to study coolly, and think soundly, must lie into a corner and bear the reproach of inefficiency, while the storm around is playing its noisy part and passing away.

At such a time, how cheering to hear the familiar voice of that well-tried and glorious Friend, speaking from a higher world, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This is none other than our divine Saviour. He was to be lifted up upon the cross. And as thus lifted up, a bleeding victim for the sins of the world, he was to draw all men unto him. Here, in the cross of Christ, is the realization of the beautiful theory of the oneness of truth—that truth which is but the "stiring of the great mind of the universe." Observe the language—*draw*—indicating something *attractive* in Christ crucified:—something that would catch the eye, and captivate the hearts of all men.

The sentiment is clearly this:—*The cross of Christ is to gain a moral triumph over all the world.*

I here announce this as an antagonist doctrine to the recent second-advent theory. The former teaches that God is to purify the world from sin by the power of the *cross*, the latter that he is to do it by the power of *fire*. The one is a moral agency, and a moral result; the other a physical agency, and a physical result. In the latter case moral government is virtually, as connected with the cross, abandoned; in the former, it is carried on to glorious consummation. If God must needs interpose *fire*, to do what the cross was to do—purify the world from sin—then the cross is defeated. It is as if a king should employ very expensive means to reclaim a rebellious city, and give out that he shall surely succeed, but finding himself foiled in the attempt, should conclude to set fire to it and burn the inhabitants up.

God once destroyed the world with a flood. He then promised that he would no more destroy the world; in token whereof he set his *bow* in the cloud. That bow anticipated the cross, and the cross proclaimed *redemption*, not destruction. Nor were the consuming fires of the last day to kindle on the earth, *until* Christ had by his cross *drawn all men unto him*, and the jubilant shout of earth's redeemed millions had ascended to heaven through long ages of millenial glory.

Every student of the Bible must have observed that it is a book having very little to do with mathematics. Yet our modern theorisers have ten times as much to do with mathematical calculations upon the prophecies, as with the cross of Christ. The arithmetic of the Bible is mainly the arithmetic of the cross; and it is principally concerned in computing the *value* of that cross, as learned from the dignity of its victim and the glory of its results.

In the *drawing* of men to Christ, as lifted up upon the cross, the following facts are to be distinctly noticed.

I. There was to be no *miraculous* agency. Nothing arresting or contravening the established laws of nature. The wheels of nature were to move their steady rounds, until the triumphs of the cross were fully achieved. Miracles were interposed to put the seal of God upon his holy religion, but not to extend its dominions from age to age; for a perpetual miracle would defeat itself. It would cease to be a miracle.

II. This drawing to Christ was to be effected through the agency of those heavenly *truths* which cluster about the cross. The cross of Jesus was to be the central point of radiation, whence the subduing light was to go forth. The cross said, "Let there be *light*,"—"and there *was* light." The bright developement of the character of God, as a being of infinite justice, mercy, and truth; the awful malignity of sin, as illustrated in the agonies of Jesus; the amazing value of the soul, as seen in the price paid for its redemption; the immortality

of man; and the endless destinies of weal or woe pending on his relation to God,—these are the truths which, radiating from the cross, were to seize on the hearts of men and draw them to Christ.

III. These truths were to be made *effectual* by the Holy Ghost, whose influence is secured and sent down to men by virtue of the cross. Christ declared to his disciples, that as the fruit of his death and ascension, the Holy Ghost should be given, to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Accordingly the Holy Ghost *was* given, in greater measure after the ascension than ever before, and has through all ages accompanied the gospel and drawn men to Christ. His influence will be given in greater and greater measure, as the millenium advances;—he will come down like rain on mown grass, like the soft and warm showers of a summer evening that water the earth. Then will the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the sun and the moon endure.

IV. This was to be a *gradual* work. Our Saviour compares it to the operation of *leaven*, which a woman hid in three measures of meal till all was leavened. He also compares it to the process by which the *mustard* seed rises from the smallest beginning to a stately tree. There are times when the leaven, subjected to unusual heat, operates more rapidly than at others; there are times when the tree, feeling the refreshing influence of the warm rain and sun-beams, starts forth as with a fresh life;—it has its winter and its summer,—but the general law of progression maintains. And thus the triumphs of the cross, retarded now, and now again moving with fresh impulse, are on the whole making progress from age to age. Sometimes a nation is, as it were, born in a day—as in the case of the Sandwich Islands. This, however, is only when things have ripened for the issue, by a gradual process.

V. In this drawing to Christ, no *other* than *moral* means were to be employed. It was for Mahomet to take the sword, for the Brahmin to wield the terrors of cast, and for the Roman pontiff to light the fires of the stake; but it was for the heralds of the cross, unarmed with carnal weapons and with carnal sophistries, to proclaim *Christ crucified*—the wisdom and the power of God for salvation. They who should take the sword, were to perish by the sword. The proud terrors of cast should be brought to the dust;—the fires of persecution should leap back on the kindler, and devour him;—and all the crafty should be finally caught in their own craftiness. While the friends of the cross were to go humbly forth, making known to men the love of a dying Saviour. And never have they swerved from this course, but they have brought reproach on the cross, and evil on their own heads. Not even the glitter of *wealth* is allowed to share the honor of human salvation. It is a cross of *wood*, not of *gold*, that is to save the world.

VI. This drawing to Christ was to be effected in a *calm* and *noiseless* way. There was to be no flourish of trumpets, no ostentatious parade, no voice of strife. Neither Christ, nor his herald, should strive nor cry, neither should any man hear his voice in the streets. With the calm energy of Omnipotence, he should send forth judgment unto victory, and in his name should the Gentiles trust. How like this are all God's *other* works of blessing. How noiselessly does the sun rise, and pour his beams over the world;—how calmly do the wheels of nature move round;—how gently does the acorn start from the earth, and rise in spreading branches to heaven. Such is the *modesty*, so to speak, of God's way,—such the beautiful "hiding of his power."

And how *un*like this, are the noisy and disorderly movements of second adventism. In the benign work of drawing men to the cross, the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake, but *in the still small voice.* It is the gentle whisper of the cross—mild, tender, subduing.

VII. This drawing to Christ was to be *effectual*, and, ultimately, *universal.* My word *shall not* return unto me void, saith Jehovah, it *shall accomplish* the end for which I sent it. Although *Israel* be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious, saith Christ, in the eyes of Jehovah. The Gentiles should come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. Ages might elapse before the complete triumph should be gained;—multitudes, offended at the cross, and following the example of stubborn Jews, might wonder and despise, and perish, —but they would only destroy themselves. Thevict ories of the cross would ride over the opposer's head and grind him to powder, in their ongoings to complete and universal triumph. And I, if I be lifted up, said Christ, *will draw all men unto me.* This has unquestionable reference to the fulfilment of prophecy respecting the *ultimate triumph* of the cross. Just as if it should be said, that a victorious king will surely succeed in subduing a *whole nation* of rebels, although many of the incorrigible would perish in the struggle.

Jehovah even takes his most solemn *oath* on this subject:—*As I live*, saith the Lord, *every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. All people and kindred and tongues shall come and worship, and bow down before him.* The knowledge of the Lord shall *fill the whole earth*, as the waters fill the seas. None shall have occasion to say unto another, Know ye the Lord; for *all* shall know him, from the greatest unto the least. The Lord shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and *all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

Now every student of history must know that these prophecies *have not been fulfilled.* Hence, if the Bible be God's book—if the doctrine of the cross be true—the modern theory of second adventism cannot possibly be true.

That theory is briefly this:—that sometime in this year, 1843, Je-

sus Christ will come in the clouds of heaven—raise the righteous dead and take them up, with the living believers, to be with himself in the air; while he burns up the world and all the unbelieving in it:—that the world, thus *purified by fire*—not by the cross—will be made into a beautiful habitation:—that the New Jerusalem, a literal city, with walls fifteen hundred miles long, fifteen hundred miles broad, and fifteen hundred miles high, will descend from heaven upon it:—that Christ, and saints and angels, will also descend and dwell in that city, and, with the righteous of the earth, reign a thousand years. After that, the wicked, who have lain for a thousand years as ashes under the feet of the righteous, will be raised, judged, and sent to hell, or devoured by fire from the Lord out of heaven.

Now all this in in *direct contradiction* to the scriptural *doctrine of the cross*, which we have been exhibiting. It is equally in contradiction to the *whole course of Providence.*

Science teaches us, that the Creator was for a very long period engaged in preparing the earth for man,—that by the slow process of ages he stowed away those vast treasures of coal, minerals, and metals, which we have but just *begun* to use, and which were clearly designed to minister to the wants of our race in the populous and prolonged ages of the millenium. History informs us that the *sciences* and *arts* have, as it were, but *just emerged* into day, and come forth to the service of the cross. Navigation, the application of steam, the principles and facilities of universal commerce, and especially that most important of all arts to the cause of Christ—printing—are of very recent origin. All things, in the course of Providence, perfectly harmonize with the views we have taken of the *gradual* conquest and *ultimate triumph of the cross.* The great law of God's kingdom, both in the natural and moral world, is one of gradual progression.

It may be incumbent on us briefly to state here, wherein lies the error of that strange theory respecting the destruction of the world in 1843. It lies not in the *inference*, but in the *premise.* Grant the premise, and the inference follows. The data being given, every school boy can figure it out;—but it is quite another thing to go to the bottom of the subject, and settle the data themselves on a sound exegetical scripture basis. The errors of the premise are an unauthorised use of numbers, and a mixing together of prophecies that are distinct. The two thousand three hundred *days* of Daniel, are made to mean so many *years.* There are some instances in the Bible, in which days are used, figuratively, to signify years, and even generations and ages; but there is no proof that they are so used here. There is abundant proof to the contrary. Supposing days to mean years, the advocates of this theory have only to subtract from two thousand three hundred years four hundred and fifty-seven years, the number of years before Christ when Daniel prophesied, and the remainder is 1843,—the year of our Lord, when it is claimed that the great cleansing of the world by fire is to take place. It is also said,

that the seventy *weeks* of Daniel mean seven times seventy—that is, four hundred and ninety *years*—the period to elapse from the time of Daniel to the crucifixion of Christ.

Now the fallacy is, that the two thousand three hundred days have not here a *figurative*, but a *literal* meaning. They mean not *years*, but *days*;—and instead of refering to the cleansing of the *world* by *fire*, they refer to the cleansing of the Jewish *temple*, by Judas Maccabecus;—which took place 165 B. C., and two thousand three hundred days, or a little more than six and a half years after the "desolation" of the sanctuary, to which the prophet refers. The words of Daniel are, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot. And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred *days*; then shall the *sanctuary be cleansed*." Take the prophet as he *says*, and all is plain.

The other error lies in confounding prophecies that are distinct. It should be here remarked, that the truths of God lie in the Bible very much as do his gifts in nature:—We find a strata of mineral lying close by the side of a metallic strata;—we find a diamond sparkling in a bed of rough earth;—substances totally unlike, and having respect in their creation to widely different ends, are thus placed by God in juxta-position. Wise reasons for this may be shown, but our present discourse is not the place for them.

Suffice it to say, that the prophecies lie in the Bible in this manner; and it is impossible to see them in their precise nature and bearings, without a careful study of the genius and structure of the original Hebrew. Hence, no man should undertake to be a public teacher of that most delicate and difficult of all subjects—the prophecies—without a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures in their original languages.

Let us here state a single principle of the prophetic Scriptures, which may be obvious to all:—Between two distinct prophecies, which lie by the side of each other, there is usually one or more points of resemblance, making the first a type of the second. Thus the reign of Solomon, typefies that of Christ; the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, &c. Hence these prophecies are found in juxta-position, the one sliding into the other, as in the seventy-second Psalm, and in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew The same principle applies to the prophecies of Daniel. Prophecies respecting the temporal troubles and deliverances of the Jews, respecting the desolations and restorations of the temple, respecting the coming and death of Christ, are connected with others refering to the final consummation, when the dead shall awake from their graves, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever." By not regarding this principle, and thus confounding things that are distinct, men have been left, at other periods, as well as the present,

to form those idle theories respecting the end of the world, which have wrought such evil.

In this way the end of the world was predicted to take place in A. D. 365, from the scripture which records that Christ, after reading of the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, said, "This day is this scripture fiulfiiled in your ears." Considering this a prophetic *year*, many imagined that the day of vengeance, or day of judgment, would immediately follow the termination of the 365th year. The general panic was awful. The ordinary pursuits of life were abandoned;—some rushed upon suicide; and others even sacrificed their own children. Such are the bitter fruits of error and fanaticism. It is by a similar mode of calculation, that the present second-advent theory is made out. The morbid passion for excitement, unbridled imagination, love of the marvellous, dethrone reason, and carry judgment away as with a tempest. This, however, is said with all due tenderness and respect;—for many of the subjects of this delusion are among our most excellent citizens and fellow-christians. Some of them it may permanently injure, but with most it will soon pass harmlessly away.

A similar panic, respecting the end of the world, occurred in the year 1000. Mr. Mosheim says—"Among the opinions which took possession of the minds of men, none occasioned such a universal panic, nor such dreadful impressions of terror and dismay, as a notion that now prevailed, of the immediate approach of the day of judgment. They imagined that St. John had clearly foretold, that after a thousand years from the birth of Christ, Satan was to be let loose from his prison, and the conflagration of the world to follow. Hence prodigious numbers of people abandoned all the civil connexions and their parental relations, and giving over to the churches and monasteries all their lands, treasures, and worldly effects, repaired with the utmost precipitation to Palestine, where they imagined Christ would descend.—When an eclipse of the sun or moon happened to be visible, the cities were deserted, and their miserable inhabitants fled for refuge to caverns, and hid themselves among the craggy rocks, and under the bending summits of steep mountains. In many places, temples, palaces, and noble edifices, both public and private, were suffered to decay;—they were even pulled down, from a notion that they were no longer of any use, since the final dissolution of all things was at hand. In a word, no language is sufficient to express the confusion and despair that tormented the minds of these miserable mortals on this occasion."

Similar panics have been experienced at other periods of time. Still we are asked—What evil can the modern theory respecting the end of the world do? We answer, much, every way; chiefly, because men are saved by *truth*, not by *error*. But, it is asked, Should we not be *always* ready? True, but not always in *expectation* of an *immediate* end, when that end is obviously remote.

God has made all things beautiful *in their place*. We ought to be

ready to die, within *one hour;* but we ought not to *expect* to die in one hour, and make our calculations accordingly. Suppose all men were to be under the perpetual expectation of dying in one hour? What would become of the world? And so all men ought to be *ready* for the judgment day; but suppose all men were to be in actual *expectation* of it, within one month? Suppose all the world were to believe this modern theory of second-adventism:—The earth would be filled with maniacs. God gives to the Christian dying grace for the dying hour; and when that great and awful event—the conflagration of the world—shall actually come, it will be after Christians have received the appropriate grace for it, in the long ages of millenial glory. With entire composure they will then be able to look down, as from the pavillion of Jehovah, on a burning world.

Nor is this all. To have the mind so intensely absorbed with the single idea of the speedy destruction of the world, is to divert it from the essential duties of *religion*, as well as of social life. The single point comes to be, to believe this theory;—there is no repentance of sin, no regeneration of heart, no drawing of men to the *cross of Christ*. The great and beneficent design of the gospel is defeated. The cross is set aside, and another agent is looked to.

In conclusion, what are we taught respecting the end of the world? I cannot find that the *time* of the end is any where made known in the Bible. Indeed, we are expressly informed that no man shall know it. That Christ will finally come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, to consume the world, and assemble the whole race of man to judgment, is clearly revealed; but *when* that will be, God has, for wise reasons, concealed among the secrets of his own mind. We have seen, however, that great and prolonged events are yet to precede it. A mighty roll of glorious prophecies remains to be fulfilled. Many ages are yet to pass away. The world is in its infancy. It has scarcely begun to speak and go alone; it has not fully learned its alphabet. Our convictions are continually gaining strength, from every view of the subject, that the cross of Jesus is to stand high in the eyes of the world, and sway a glorious dominion over it, for very many ages longer than the earth has yet stood. If we may so speak, the cross of Christ is but just beginning to educate the infant world, for a prolonged and vigorous manhood of holy service. And there shall be no disappointment; FOR THIS IS OF GOD.

> "Jesus SHALL reign where'er the sun
> Doth his successive journeys run,
> His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
> Till suns shall rise and set no more."

Long enough will the cross have dominion over a ransomed world, to do ample justice to the blood of Christ, and satisfy the large desires of his benevolent heart. He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied; he shall *prolong* his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah

shall prosper in his hands.* What more could we ask? What else desire to anticipate? And for what other end could we wish to live? The grave will soon receive our dust, but not our spirits, nor our influence. If faithful to Christ, the former will be with him in the sphere of brighter visions and more blessed activities, awaiting the glorious consummation; the latter will be descending the stream of time, carrying blessings to unborn ages.

O, Jesus, teach us by thy cross to live for thee! Farewell, forever, all selfish aims, all lying vanities. Drawn to thy blessed cross, by chords of love, may we cast down all our burdens and our attainments together there, that whether living we may live to thee, or dying, die to thee, that living or dying we may be thine. Amen.

* Isaiah, 53.

SERMON CCCL.

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MISSIONARIES PURIFIED BY AFFLICTION.

PREACHED AT PONTIANAK, ON SABBATH, JUNE 26, 1842, TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BORNEO MISSION, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.*

"Behold I have refined thee but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."—Isaiah xlviii. 10.

In the world ye shall have tribulation. Such is the heritage of the saints upon the earth. It applies to all God's people, particularly to his dearest children, and pre-eminently to those designed to become instruments of great and extensive good. This principle is strikingly illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs and prophets. The most touching incidents in the history of Abraham and Joseph, of Moses and David come directly in point. But the whole course of discipline through which the ancient church was called to pass, both in the wilderness and in the promised land, may justly be adduced for the same purpose. Indeed it is evidently to this that our text has more especial reference. Even God's eternal Son was not excepted from the operation of the rule. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." True, the specific object may be, and doubtless often is different, and sometimes widely different, as in the case of the Savior, compared with believers. But in regard to the latter, with whom we are now chiefly concerned, the general reason is obvious. It is thus they are

* The following was the resolution of the Mission:—"Resolved, That the sermon of Brother Thomson, furnished at our request, be sent to the Editor of the National Preacher, with a request that it be published, and a copy sent to as many Mission Stations as known and practicable."

"Pontianak, Sept. 17, 1842."

purified from the dross of sin. It is thus they are freed from the elements of earthliness. It is thus they are refined and made not only susceptible of a warmer sympathy or fellow-feeling for the wretched, but actually more holy, more harmless, more entirely and sincerely devoted to the service and glory of God, in a word, more like their blessed Master. For it is only as they reflect his image that they can please God or benefit their fellow-men.

The process is often dreadfully severe, though always tempered to the weakness of our nature and carried on gradually so as not to overwhelm us at once, by the suddenness and awfulness of the change it is to produce. This cannot be effected at a single stroke. Should He immediately finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, the spirit would fail before him and the souls which he has made. But He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. Hence, He says: "Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver," that is, not in the way in which silver is refined.

It is well known that the precious metals, and especially silver, require the most intense and searching power of fire to purge away their impurities; such devouring heat in fact as will infallibly consume all but the essential unadulterated mass. This is an emblem of the final test to be applied in the judgment. But happily our God and Savior has a more penetrating eye, and a more exquisite discernment than the most skilful artificer in gold and silver. He can perceive the faintest traces of his own likeness, not only before the process of refining is complete, but as soon as they are impressed upon the soul so that He can try, approve, and choose in the furnace of affliction, and need not leave the decision either for himself or for us to the more fiery ordeal of the judgment. Then He will satisfy the universe. But He always satisfies himself before, and is willing to afford us all the benefit of his divine satisfaction.

To secure this result, however, those whom the hand of God has touched should hear the rod and who hath appointed it. We must attend to the voice of God in our afflictions. Leaving out of view all second causes, we must see and acknowledge his sovereign right and power alone in these things, and then with all humility, meekness, and docility, enquire wherefore He is thus contending with us? what is the cause of the chastisement? what is the design of our Father in its infliction? This is necessary in order to view the dispensation aright, and especially to turn it to his glory and the profit of our own souls.

I. I need not say, dear brethren, that I have a special aim in bringing this subject to your consideration on the present occasion. It is no new reflection that the hand of God is upon us. From the commencement of our mission to this very day, one wave of trouble has rolled quickly upon another till it seems almost as if we were at last to be swallowed up, and no trace of our existence to be left but the

sad and cheerless record of our blasted hopes and unrealized anticipations. The fair fields of labor we expected to enter have been shut and barred against us. Our forces have been scattered, and our energies enfeebled. After a lapse of five years, during which our original number has been almost doubled by new recruits, those remaining in the field are even less than the first company which arrived. Truly we have been sifted like wheat. Some have been forced away by unconquerable bodily disease, and one by the more inveterate maladies of the soul. Sickness has entered every house, and death has snatched a victim from almost every family. The infant has been taken from its mother's breast, and the mother has been called to leave her sucking child in the hand of strangers. The sweet home of the husband and father has been made desolate, and his heart-strings rent by the pangs of separation from the wife of his youth and the object of his tenderest attachment; he has been doomed to sit and sigh in the weeds of widowhood. Yes, "I am the man that hath" thus "seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." Even now, when we were beginning fondly to hope that the Lord would turn our captivity as the streams in the south, and to pray, with some confidence of expectation: "Save, now, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord! we beseech thee now send prosperity," the knell of death has again reached our ears, and one on whom we calculated with the utmost assurance to come and cheer us on our way, and help us in our work, has been taken to another sphere, and called to the performance of other duties. Yes, Stryker, who panted to be with us, to see our faces in the flesh; to joy and sorrow, to labor and suffer with us, has taken his flight from earth and entered the world of spirits!

But we have not merely suffered among ourselves. The cause to which we are devoted has, in the same period, experienced the saddest reverses. I do not refer now so particularly to the disappointment and disaster which has attended the most enlarged plans and the most vigorous endeavors to establish and sustain individual missions, though these are by no means unworthy of consideration, but to the general barrenness of those results of missionary labor which are most of all to be desired, together with the severe and repeated checks which have impeded the operations of the whole scheme, and the awful shocks to which the entire system of means and measures has, in consequence, been subjected.

I am well aware that great and distinguished mercies have been mingled with our cup of adversity. Our cause, while made to suffer so grievously in some respects, has been most abundantly favored in others. While plans have been thwarted, operations trammelled, and missions broken up in one quarter, in another the Spirit has been marvellously poured out, and souls in unwonted numbers have been gathered into the kingdom. Nor have we ourselves, though contending with an almost unremitted tide of afflictions, been deserted in the conflict, or left without marked tokens of the Divine regard. Many

a wound which pierced to the quick has been graciously healed. The breach, which seemed heaven-wide, has been mysteriously closed. Apparent evil has been converted into certain good. And in a thousand ways the Lord has been declaring himself ready to turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind.

Yet who can look at all the various and continued chastisements of his hand without something more than a suspicion that He is still contending with us? that He sees much which is wrong in our principles, our feelings, or our conduct? and that He means to refine us in the furnace before He gives us the most divine success in our work?

Let us then endeavor to take these things deeply to heart, and to this end:—

II. Humbly call to mind and contemplate, at least, some of the causes which we may suppose have induced those fatherly rebukes which we have experienced.

But the question we shall thus be called to answer embraces too many points of serious moment to be treated, at large, in a single discourse. The most that can be expected of us will be to suggest topics of solemn reflection, rather than to discuss the merits of the case. Nor even, with this limitation in view, do we intend to survey the whole ground. It may easily be that the church is as deeply interested as her messengers, in the secret reasons of our common calamities. But while we consider ourselves in a deeply interesting and holy sense one with the church, and would keep the chords of sympathy between us always vibrative, and always tender, yet isolated as we are in situation, though not in heart, we are ill qualified to judge either of character or conduct at home, nor would the office of censors at all beseem us if ever so well qualified. We take it for granted the church in all her various tribes and sections will devoutly ponder the same momentous question, but as it will behove all "to mourn apart," not only sectionally, but individually, so we consider it our especial province to examine, apply, and improve the subject as missionaries.

Until we have thus cleared ourselves, we have no right even to think the difficulty is elsewhere. Indeed, notwithstanding it is a matter of common concern, and must be canvassed as such, each individual should be very sure it is not in himself before he imputes it to others, lest, at the very moment he condemns the offender, the Judge of all should thunder in his guilty soul: "Thou art the man!"

Such is the spirit in which I desire to present this topic to your solemn consideration, and while, with great diffidence, offering my reflections for common profit, I would fain have my own heart alive to every searching truth and every awakening sentiment which may be uttered.

At the same time, it is not my design to be personal, and therefore,

I shall not confine myself to the more glaring faults of individuals, or to the inconsistencies and sins which have come to light in our own little community, but taking an enlarged and comprehensive view of facts, circumstances, and characters, within the field of observation just defined, endeavor to turn your thoughts to those hidden springs of action, from which all our mistakes and follies proceed, and which we may consequently regard as those roots of bitterness which Infinite Wisdom means to extract by the instrumentality of affliction, accompanied by the living energies of his own Spirit. And,

1. I would notice the want of holiness of heart. By holiness is meant universal purity. In God, this is absolute; in his people here, at least, it is only comparative, though if they live the religion they profess, however it may sometimes fail in practice, it will be perfect in principle, in purpose, and in effort. It implies then the hearty renunciation of all sin, a sincere aversion to it in every perceptible form, and a living, active, and ardent desire to avoid it in ourselves, and discountenance and oppose it in all around us. It supposes our motives to be simple, disinterested, and spiritual, and all our conduct to be governed by a supreme regard for the glory of God, and the good of his creatures. Thus it raises the soul above the contagion of earthliness, and assimilates it to the atmosphere of heaven. But while it elevates the affections, it softens the feelings, and humbles the carriage. It exerts a mellowing influence on all the features of the character. Indeed, it draws out, heightens, and brightens, every christian grace and accomplishment. Hence, you will readily perceive it fits its subjects for every good word and work, and that without the savor of this salt we are actually good for nothing. How then does the state of our hearts and the conduct of our lives harmonize with this grand requisite of duty, devotion, and usefulness? If weighed in the balance, shall we not be found wanting? O let us be honest with ourselves, let us look into our hearts, let us scrutinize our motives, let us bring our thoughts, our feelings, our words, our actions, to the test of truth, to the touchstone of spiritual purity, of genuine holiness. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. Nor can we expect, without holiness, to lead others to the contemplation of his glory. The idea is as absurd as the end will be fruitless. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. This is the divine injunction. Be it then our constant care to perfect holiness in the fear of God. If we do not, there will remain naught but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Then He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and though we ourselves should be saved, all our works performed in worldliness, and stained with sin, will assuredly be burned up.

2. Out of this defect, supposing it to exist, will naturally spring a feeling of self-importance and self-complacency, than which no thing can be more displeasing to God, exert a more withering influence upon the soul, or more surely blight every prospect of spiritual use-

fulness. And, unhappily, if the needful safeguard is thus lacking, the very nature of our work is calculated to foster the development and growth of this deadly poison.

The conversion of the world is the noblest enterprise which can engage the powers of man. Nor has its moral grandeur been hidden from the discerning mind or left to spend its force upon the more wise and pious few, who could be quickened by its heavenly glory without being dazzled by its unearthly splendor. It has been made the theme of the pious orator, and the effulgence of its praises has blazoned from the sacred desk. Placed in proud contrast with all that is magnificent in nature, and all that is sublime in sentiment, its high and commanding superiority, has challenged the admiration of the good and great of every name. It is, in fact, so far as our knowledge extends, the great work of the great God. What an honor then for any mortal to co-operate in its execution! Whose bosom would not heave with conscious elevation at the thought of being associated with it even in the humblest way? This is natural, but, O, how dangerous. Great grace is needed to maintain our balance at such a giddy height. And to increase the peril, especially of the youthful missionary, a quite needless, and altogether unwarranted, line of distinction has sometimes been drawn between him and the pastors of the churches at home, as if they were not really engaged in the same work, and provided they are in their proper sphere, and perform their duties with humility, diligence, and zeal, occupying a post as honorable, and achieving results as glorious as the most distinguished ambassadors of Christ to the heathen. Hence it becomes so easy to substitute our connection with the missionary enterprise for fidelity in its prosecution, and imagine it is enough to have enlisted under the banner of the cross, though we should never fight the battles of the Lord. Nay, we may even flatter ourselves with the idea that the zeal we have shown, and the sacrifices we have made in giving ourselves to this work, cannot be more than compensated by any measure of self-indulgence accessible in the field, or any degree of arrogance in our conduct towards our fellow-laborers. Thus a wide door is opened for the admission of anger, discord, dissension, and all uncharitableness. Only let one person think of himself more highly than he ought to think, and consequently love to have the pre-eminence, and what a fire may be kindled even amongst the least combustible materials!

Another no less baneful consequence of the same spirit, is a disposition to look more at the splendor of plans, and the grandeur of undertakings, than at the power of carrying them into execution, or the particular indications of Providence, and other circumstances which ought to govern our decisions and direct the employment of our energies. Am I venting suspicions without the bounds of probability? Alas, I have heard things in this connection which make me blush for the motives of missionaries.

It is well for us to do great things when God puts it in the power of our hands to do them; but wo to us if we vainly attempt great things simply because they are great, without regard to our peculiar situation and the calls of duty from other quarters. Far better were it for us to remain contented in an humbler sphere than thus to provoke the wrath of heaven, by seeking our own instead of the things which are Jesus Christ's. Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not. Our real glory is to annihilate self. Our highest interest is to be willing to be any thing, in order to glorify God, to honor Christ, and save immortal souls.

3. Closely allied to the preceding point is the entertainment of romantic notions of the missionary work. The enterprise of converting this revolted world to God, is a sober reality. It is no quixotic undertaking, inspired by a heated imagination, and urged forward by the day dreams of a disordered fancy. Nor can it be carried on by any principle of a visionary enthusiasm, or a whimsical philosophy. There is far too much of stubborn fact in the difficulties, the dangers, and the discouragements to be encountered. It may even be questioned whether the best impulses of such a motive are capable of conducting its subjects through the most distant outworks of the citadel we have to storm—through the woods and marshes, the bogs and quagmires which are often to be passed in order to see the enemy in his strong holds, and find out the most important points of assault. How then can it be expected to carry them through the long, tedious, spirit-trying warfare with all that is perverse and wicked in the human heart, and all that is wily and daring in the devices of Satan?

It is to be hoped, however, that the halo of romance is, at last, too much dissipated for any considerate person to enter the field merely on such unsubstantial grounds as these. Some correct idea of the work, some sense of its importance and difficulty, we may reasonably suppose is entertained by most, if not all, who now offer their services to God and the church. Yet we greatly fear that not a few still allow their imaginations far more play, in contemplating this subject, than is consistent with truth, or conducive to usefulness. A sort of enchantment is spread over the missionary field, which makes it appear, after all, something like a fairy-land. Difficulties, dangers, discouragements, present themselves in such a romantic air that they wane into insignificance, and are treated as unreal; or the charm of suffering and toiling in a good cause, appears so fascinating in the distance, that the power of endurance is entirely over-rated in anticipation. On the other hand, all that is beautiful, and all that is grand in high enterprise and noble-daring, all that is good and amiable, and praise-worthy in virtuous conduct and holy effort, shines out with such overpowering lustre as quite to entrance the soul which, lost in the glare of apparent results, forgets or disregards the toils and conflicts through which they have been gained.

These views and feelings most completely prepare the missionary candidate for disappointment, and such disappointment as will be apt to overwhelm him with despondency, and unnerve his energies for any vigorous exertion. When he comes to stand upon the ground all such airy fancies will be found to vanish, and unless he has something more substantial to support him, with broken spirits and a quailing heart, he will shrink from difficulty, and flee from danger, as if aught of this kind had never entered into his estimates of the missionary life. Yea, he will be frightened at the rustling of a leaf, and flee when no man pursueth. Thus, ere long, his own security and his own comfort become the grand objects of his care, and he is so taken up with his health, his comfort, or his personal gratification, that his work, if ever he commenced it, is neglected; he is removed as far as possible from the sphere in which he could best discharge the duties of his commission, and wrapped up in the mantle of supreme selfishness. And will God, think you, smile upon such a missionary, or bless the interest with which he is connected?—No; should nature, all around him, thrive and bid him, too, to flourish, that man will wither beneath the frown of heaven. Nor is it likely that he will perish alone in his iniquity. The cause in which he is engaged will assuredly suffer, and God alone can tell where the consequences of his folly will end.

For out of this, you will readily perceive, may, nay, I had almost said certainly will grow another evil of the most fearful magnitude, that is to say:—

4. Carelessness and unfaithfulness in using means of support. These are a most sacred trust, and we cannot possibly guard their employment with too jealous an eye. They come not unfrequently from the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, and are therefore the fruits of their self-denial and devotion. What unthankfulness to squander the gifts, the very living of the destitute! They are from the treasury of the Lord. What sacrilege to divert them from their appropriate channel, and employ them for luxurious gratification or needless profusion! I have no reference to the slander that missionaries live in palaces and live like princes. All who know the truth, know the contrary, and those who will not believe upon the most abundant testimony, probably would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

But there are other ways in which missionaries may err in this matter. If, for instance, they choose a location more on account of its pleasantness, and the comforts with which it is surrounded, than for the sphere of usefulness it affords, or if they choose a more costly in preference to a more economical dwelling, merely because the site is more agreeable and fashionable, or the building more elegant and tasteful, though the difference may seem trifling and the object allowable, and though they may persuade themselves the time is not come for them to build the Lord's house, may not God justly demand of

them, "is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"—But this is only a single illustration of the point in hand, and one perhaps, after all, not likely often to occur in fact. Yet it shows how easy it is to go astray, and when once astray all know how difficult it is to return into the path of duty. Perhaps we have all something to lament in this respect. At any rate those providences which have most signally afflicted the cause to which we are devoted, seem significantly to point to a great evil of this kind in one quarter or another. If we have not done the deed, we may have winked at those who did it. It is an awful thing thus to kick at the sacrifices of Jehovah, and make ourselves fat with the chiefest of the offerings of his people. For this sin, the sons of Eli were cut off, and even their father brought the judgment of heaven upon his house forever for the iniquity he knew, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

But there is a species of error, coming under this general description, to which missionaries in certain situations are peculiarly liable, and which, therefore, deserves a separate and more particular consideration. I mean:—

5. Turning aside from our great business to any other object of pursuit. This is certainly nothing less than unfaithfulness in the application of missionary funds. These we know are given for one specific purpose—the support of missionaries in the performance of missionary labor, that is, labor bearing as directly as may be on the conversion of benighted souls, and the moral and spiritual illumination of this dark world. If, therefore, we allow ourselves to be diverted in any measure from this simple and definite end, it matters not how good or important the object which draws our attention, we are unfaithful to our trust, and cannot expect the blessing of our King and Savior.

These remarks, of course, do not touch such subordinate work as is needful or important to the successful prosecution of our grand design. All literary labors and systems of instruction which bear directly on this point are not merely proper, but in a sense actually binding upon us.

It is easy to see, however, that this is a very perilous position. Especially if we have hard materials to work upon—men who have strong and unyielding prejudices, and these fortified by a show of science, falsely so called, it is extremely natural for our worldly minds to slip into the conclusion that these bulwarks of error and superstition must be swept away by the force of real learning, *before* we can expect to find an entrance for the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus literature comes to be substituted for the Bible, as if the Word of God was not more quick and powerful than the word of man, and even sharper than *any two-edged* sword. But such a perversion of our high calling has still more hurtful consequences. It may produce much unhappy feeling, and many painful conflicts between brethren whose

hearts ought to be knit together in love. A literary spirit is not the spirit of missions, and the effects of the exchange will be seen in the bitterness and rancour always manifested when critical acumen is more cherished than the love of souls. Forgetting that, at the best, all the productions of foreigners in a strange tongue must needs be imperfect, and endeavoring to correct each other's faults in charity and meekness, such men as missionaries may fall to biting and devouring one another on account of mistakes in the grammar and idiom of languages, in which none have reason to boast of their proficiency. This is just as if the Apostles and Evangelists had set themselves up as disputants concerning the comparative purity of the Greek used in the Gospels and Epistles, while even the Holy Ghost in infinite wisdom left them all to employ that kind of Greek, intelligible, though not pure, with which they were most familiar, and could employ to the best advantage. What a comment upon our superior taste and discernment! But, in truth, it is all vain jangling of those who have swerved from the path of duty, and affect to be literary pedants, instead of humble ambassadors of the meek and lowly Jesus. Nor can any of us expect a better end if we do not stick unto his testimonies, and give ourselves wholly to the performance of his work.

After noticing so many other reasons for the Divine displeasure, which it is supposed may be to a greater or less extent among missionaries, it will not appear strange that I should add:—

6. Inadequate concern for the salvation of souls. If men are to be found among us so deficient in principle, and so erratic in practice, as I have led you to imagine, then it cannot surprise you to intimate that the care of souls has not fired every bosom and weighed upon every spirit as it ought.

Indeed, independent of these things, there is much in the circumstances of the missionary, and the situation of those for whom he labors, to damp the ardor and relax the energies of the best and most devoted. It is difficult in the extreme for our poor natures and our weak graces, when once familiar with the blindness, the insensibility, and the obstinacy of heathen and mahometans, to maintain all the warmth of interest and tenderness of feeling for their spiritual welfare, which constitutes the missionary spirit, and is essential to the missionary character. If, therefore, we are not greatly on our guard, and especially if we do not habitually look up for assistance, we will most assuredly become dead to the spirit of our work. And if our concern for souls once ceases, we immediately lose all the high and commanding motives of the Gospel for self-consecration and devotion. We become mere worldlings, even in the prosecution of our heavenly calling. The glories and terrors of the eternal world wax dim to our spiritual vision, or fade away entirely from our sight. Whatever we may think proper to do for the body and for time, the undying man and the unchanging state are coldly overlooked, or unfeelingly neglected, and whatever we may achieve, the end of our commission is

not answered. Is this, then, the performance of missionary work? What if we cry up schools, and devote ourselves to secular and scientific instruction! What if we clothe the naked and feed the hungry! What if we train the mind and the body to all that is wholesome, refined, and elevating! If Christ is not faithfully, affectionately, and habitually preached; if the Gospel is not constantly inculcated, applied, and enforced; if the conscience is not enlightened, awakened, and warned; if every thing in our power is not done to convert and sanctify the soul, our labor is lost; we cannot expect God to bless it, and without his blessing it may be worse than useless. The richest earthly blessing may thus be turned into a curse. And let us not flatter ourselves that the curse will fall only on the head of these sheep. "Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" Yea, wo is me *if I preach not* the Gospel!

But to sum up all these evils in one comprehensive description, or to point out the source from which they all flow, I must call your attention lastly:—

7. To a lack of the spirit of devotion. Prayer is as correctly as it is poetically called, "the Christian's vital breath." Just as far, therefore, as we lose the spirit of prayer, we cease to live the life of a Christian; all our graces languish, our souls verge to the shades of death, yea, our feet take hold on hell! Hence arises every species of spiritual decay. Our great enemy immediately gets the advantage over us. Our defence is departed. For the Lord will not protect those who shun his presence, or do not find delight in his communion, and love to walk beneath his shadow. Thus deserted of heaven, left to eat of the fruit of our own way, and exposed to the wiles of the adversary, the natural consequence is, that we wax worse and worse. There is no corruption in principle or practice to which we are not liable, and if not checked in our career, and restored by grace divine, there are no lengths to which we may not go in delusion and in sin. O! my brethren, into what an abyss may even the missionary thus be allowed to fall! The thought is enough to make the stoutest tremble, as the event is sufficient to make the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

But, brethren, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. Still, it becomes us all to beware of the danger as we would escape the catastrophe. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe. This is our citadel. If we cling to the horns of the altar, all will be well; but if we let go our hold, ruin is inevitable.

Here, therefore, you will allow me to appeal to your hearts, and ask: How does this matter stand? Can our closets, the places of our secret retirement, bear witness to the fervor of our devotions? Is the spirit of grace and supplication manifested at the family altar,

in the social circle, and amid the hallowed exercises of the solemn assembly? Is its fragrance breathed through all our daily avocations? Does it float over all the scenes in which we move? If it does, then how sweet will be our tempers, how lovely and winning our carriage, how heavenly and elevating our conversation, how meekly we will bear correction and reproof, how tenderly we will expostulate with the erring, how humbly and affectionately we will strive to inform the ignorant and persuade the obstinate, how beautiful, consistent, and influential will be all the conduct of our lives. O, if we live in the Spirit let us walk in the Spirit. Then the Spirit shall take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us, and we shall know all that pertains to life and godliness, and become workmen that need not be ashamed.

Now, especially, we should abound in prayer, for the hand of God is upon us, and if we do not heed the stroke, He will punish us seven times more for our sins. As yet He seems to say: "Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver." Then He shall change his tone and declare: "I will come near to you to judgment. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For our God is a consuming fire!"

That, therefore, we may not only avert his present displeasure, and be prepared for the more fiery ordeal, but realize all the blessings of the Covenant ourselves, and become a blessing to all around us, let us strive to improve the afflictive dispensations with which He has visited us:—

1. By deep humility and self-abasement. This is doubtless the posture into which He would bring us. "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done," saith the Lord God. Nor can we maintain any other posture with safety. So surely as our hearts are lifted up, it will be to our peril, if not to our destruction. But will any wait to be coolly reasoned into this frame? Why that one word of the Most High should break in pieces and melt the hardest heart. "All that thou hast done!" What piercing reflections must this sentence harrow up in the guilty soul. And who of us can plead entire innocence? We are verily guilty. And O how awful is the guilt implied in the slightest stain from the blood of souls. Think, for a moment, of the fatal consequences. How far has the missionary work been put back? How many hearts have been made to faint? How many hands have waxed feeble? How many souls have gone down to death unwarned? How many, for years to come, will have to tread in their steps? When you can answer these solemn enquiries with precision, you will have some adequate idea of this awfully awakening subject. Meanwhile our hearts must be hard indeed if the barest suggestion does not cover our faces with confusion, and make us wish to hide them in the dust.

But we should be equally on our guard against that spurious hu-

mility which lies in dark and melancholy views of the divine dispensations, and leads to cheerless if not plaintive musings on the present and hopeless forebodings of the future. This is only pride under another name, and is as displeasing to our God and Savior as it is fatal to our own peace and profit. True humility is one of the most engaging features of the gracious soul. While it melts down and removes every disposition to haughtiness and self-importance, it softens and smooths much if not all of the natural roughnesses and austerities of the character. It dispels the gloom of despondency, raises the drooping spirits, and lets in upon the feelings the genial light and warmth of heaven's Eternal Sun. Thus it quickens and invigorates every principle of activity and devotion.

This remark naturally leads us to notice another effect which should be produced by these humbling dispensations:—

2. Renewed self-consecration. We are not our own, for we are bought with a price. But this we are sadly prone to forget. Hence those grievous wanderings we have just been lamenting, and which we have reason to suppose have drawn down the Divine displeasure not only upon ourselves, but upon the cause to which we are devoted. O, then, while we remember our past deficiencies, and return into the path of duty with weeping and with supplications, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord by a perpetual covenant, that *shall not* be forgotten. Yea, let us make a full surrender. Are we indeed so thoroughly emptied of self as true humility supposes, then surely we ought to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are his. And is it not high time for us to be absorbed in concern for the interests of his kingdom and the salvation of precious souls, and to labor for the promotion of these objects under the full realization of eternal things? In such circumstances, it will be well, expressly and formally, to renew our covenant engagements. If done in a holy spiritual manner, this will have a most reviving effect upon our hearts. At any rate, they should be solemnly recalled from day to day, and a deep impression of their reality and sacredness should be carried into all the avocations of life.

Thus we should put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and in no respect whatever make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. But this will evidently require:—

3. Increased and constant watchfulness. Let us not, for a moment, dream—as others are too apt to dream for us—that missionaries are not men, or certainly not men of like passions with themselves. I will not say that the missionary work is not calculated to promote, what we all know it requires, pre-eminent piety. I believe it is. But how? As idle dreamers would suppose, by a sort of undefined spiritual enchantment? Is there any direct influence in the circumstances in which we are placed to enwrap the soul in heavenly contemplations, to give it living and transforming views of eternal things, and to quicken its naturally sluggish pace, in the life of god-

liness and the ways of usefulness? The very reverse of this will be found, by experience, to be the sad reality. But as it is the agitation of the waters which purifies them, so it is the exercise of the graces that stimulates and strengthens them. Yes, depend upon it, if the missionary work tends to elevate the standard of piety, as it undoubtedly does when piety exists in life and vigor, it is by the severe—I had almost said desperate—trials and struggles to which it puts every principle of truth and fidelity in the soul. It requires the soldier to be fully armed not only, but ever wakeful and ever watchful, that he may stand always firm at his post, that he may press forward with ardor in his march, that he may not halt or falter on the way, and that he may not flee in the day of battle. Let us, therefore, put on the whole armor of God, and habitually watch unto prayer. Thus shall we "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

GOD.

"Lo he goeth by me, but I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not."

"God is in every place, and all things are full of his majesty. The air, and earth, and waters, the swift tempest and gentle breeze—the storm and cloud and bright sunshine are full of him. Every star that shines, away in the distant universe, moves in him, and is guided by his power. The suns and planets of a thousand systems—all existences of all worlds are full of the all-pervading Deity, and dimly shadow forth the glory of his omnipotence. And the meanest creatures that are perceptible to vision—the smallest insect that is animated with the living principle, is not cast out from the presence of its exalted Maker, nor abandoned to the dark and cheerless empire of chance. From the highest intelligence that stands in the presence of God, encircled with the full effulgence of his glory, to the lowest reptile that shrinks from the light of day, all are pervaded by God, and exist in him. God is in every thing! But alas! we see him not. His presence is always with us, but we feel it not. His Spirit is in our hearts, speaking to us in the language of mercy, but we hear it not. Every hour he is reminding us by his providence of his gracious care and watchfulness, but we understand it not—or if we do, too soon forget it. Did we always feel his presence, the least thought or deed, or word, aproaching to sin, would fill us with fear and shame. Could we entirely divest ourselves of the associations familiar to us, and when we go out at evening, instead of listening with a sort of pensive indifference, to the breathing wind, or the murmuring fountain, could hear in them the voice of God, and feel that we were surrounded by him, we should no more cherish unhallowed thoughts than we should use the language of profane impiety, when kneeling to receive a mother's prayer and blessing.

When the tempest is abroad, and God speaks in the thunder, and shines forth in the lightning, none are so careless as to trifle; and those who see in the Deity only an angry Judge, are often filled with trembling and dismay. But is God in the tempest, and not in the calm? Has not he who excited its wild tumult, power to guide or hush it when he will? He who sees in him a Father, knows that he is always in his power, and always safe,—and sees nothing to dread in the fierce lightning, more than in the sunshine; and at all times is equally fearful of offending so good a being.

There is fearful peril in forgetting God. The Bible every where inculcates the sentiment, that this is peculiarly offensive in the sight of heaven. To exclude men from eternal life, it is not necessary that they should be openly profane, or immoral, or open violaters of human and divine laws. It is enough that they forget God, and disregard his favor, and the work of their undoing is effectually accomplished."

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SERMON CCCLI.

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THE TOKENS OF PERDITION.

"Which is to them an evident token of perdition."—Philippians i. 28.

We all know what is meant by a token. When we hear the thunder rolling at a distance, and see the clouds collecting among the hills, and becoming every moment darker and more heavy, we know that a tempest is approaching. When we witness the workings of disease,—behold it consuming the beauty of youth, and the vigor of manhood,—imparting a feverish bloom to the cheek, and a preternatural lustre to the eye,—we know that these are the auguries of death.

These are tokens in the natural world. But the moral world has also its tokens. Most men exhibit certain *religious* phenomena, from which, viewed in connection with the known influence of moral causes, we may estimate their prospects for eternity, and forecast the probabilities of their salvation.

Some of these are tokens for good. When, for instance, we see an individual apparently devoted to the service of God, displaying in his life the controlling power of repentance and faith, and manifesting the fruits of divine grace in the benevolence of his spirit, and the intensity of his efforts for the welfare of men; we feel a strong confidence that his piety is genuine, and that he will, at length, be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." When, too, we behold an unrenewed person deeply serious about religion, sensible of his corruption and guilt, and inquiring, with anxious solicitude, "what he shall do to be saved,"—though we have still many fears that he will relapse into indifference,—we are yet encouraged to hope that these impressions will terminate in vital conversion.

Most fervently could I wish that all men exhibited the cheering indications which have just been mentioned. But I cannot be insensible to the fact, that multitudes present appearances of a far different character,—appearances which, to the spiritually instructed eye, are ominous of approaching ruin, and which fill the pious observer with emotions like those of the benevolent physician, when he discovers in the symptoms of his patient the certain presage of dissolution. In many a countenance of careless levity,—in many a brazen forehead, lifted in bold defiance against the thunder of the Omnipotent,—in many an indurated bosom, that repels, with adamantine apathy, the love of a crucified Redeemer—may be seen, displayed in appalling prominence, the "evident tokens of perdition."

But as those in whom these tokens are most clear and numerous, are usually least conscious of their existence, it will be my object distinctly to describe them.

Before entering upon this subject, however, I would wish to guard against misapprehension, by stating explicitly what we mean when we affirm that particular classes of unconverted men exhibit the omens of destruction. We do *not* mean that the salvation of such persons is *impossible*. We do *not* mean that God, provoked by their perseverance in sin, has withdrawn his Spirit, sealed up their hearts in impenetrable obduracy, and, in the exercise of his holy sovereignty, excluded them from mercy. It may, indeed, be so. Inspiration assures us that He has often done this in the case of incorrigible sinners. But whether He has done it with respect to any who still live and enjoy the means of grace, is a question which lies far beyond the ken of mortals. It is not for short-sighted human vision to pierce the veil of eternity, and read, in the volume of Jehovah's deep and inscrutable counsels, the final destiny of any immortal being. The secrets of that volume Omniscience only can penetrate.

> "Closed is the book to Gabriel's eye,
> And sealed the doom it gives,
> Nor dares the favorite angel pry
> Between those folded leaves.

In asserting, therefore, that certain moral characteristics forebode the ultimate condemnation of those who exhibit them, we do not presumptuously attempt to disclose the hidden sentence which the Almighty may have passed upon such individuals;—but simply to show that, by their own voluntary infatuation, they have placed themselves in the power of circumstances, and under the influence of causes, which render their conversion to God, and, consequently, their escape from the wrath to come, extremely problematical. If, indeed, they would repent and believe the Gospel, they would undoubtedly be saved;—for all who thus comply with the overtures of mercy, however aggravated their guilt or desperate their condition, are delivered from the curse of the violated law, and become heirs of eternal life. But such is the strength of the barriers which their own conduct has

thrown in the way of their repentance and submission to Christ, as to produce a fearful improbability that they will ever exercise these affections, and thus obtain a preparation for the world of glory. That this improbability may and does exist in specific cases, is evident, not merely from the deductions of reason, and the known connection between cause and effect, but also from the unerring testimony of revelation. The Word of God, while it proclaims the freeness and universality of the offers of salvation, and indiscriminately invites all the perishing children of earth to the overflowing fountain of redeeming love, yet, by declaring that almost insuperable obstacles oppose the reformation of the inveterately wicked, and the entrance of the rich and worldly into the kingdom of heaven, plainly and solemnly intimates that the eternal prospects of some impenitent sinners are more dark and appalling than those of others.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to describe those features in the character and condition of particular classes of unregenerate men, which render their conversion improbable, and, in the fearful language of the text, are "to them an evident token of perdition."

I. *The first is a false hope of piety.*—That, among the nominal friends of the Redeemer, there are many who deceive themselves with a spurious religion, and while they have a name that they live, are in reality dead, is a fact which must be apparent even to an unreflecting observer. The Scriptures expressly declare that those only who possess the spirit and obey the commands of Christ, are his true disciples. They teach us that all the subjects of saving grace experience a moral renovation, in consequence of which they renounce their sins, separate themselves from the world, live as the inheritors of immortality, and manifest an intense and unremitted devotion to the cause of their God and Savior. And yet we see multitudes in the enclosure of the church whose conduct is widely at variance with this inspired description. In their temper and habits they appear but little different from the irreligious around them. They betray an addiction to the vanities of earth, and a disregard of eternal interests, as gross and prevailing, as if this narrow round of months and years were the whole of their existence. They evince no solicitude for the prosperity of Zion; make no exertions for the salvation of sinners; and by their inconsistency and unfaithfulness, "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." And is it possible that such are real Christians? Can we, by any allowable stretch of charity, believe that they have felt the renewing and sanctifying power of the Spirit, cleansing their polluted natures, eradicating their evil dispositions, and raising them from their death in sin to a life of holiness? No. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Judging by this infallible rule, we can form no other opinion of their state, than that, beguiled by an egregious self-deception, they have laid the "flattering unction" to their souls, that they are converted and pardoned, while

they are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Various causes may have led them to embrace such a delusion. It may be, that satiated with earthly pursuits, and disgusted at the fallacy of sublunary enjoyments, they have substituted a morbid weariness of the world for the heavenly-mindedness which the Gospel requires. Borne down by the pressure of affliction, they may have supposed themselves resigned to the Divine Will, because, in their dejection, they have ceased to struggle against it. Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, they may have gone about to establish their own righteousness, until they have, at length, come to imagine their salvation attained. Or, what is still more probable, they may have been lulled into security by a counterfeit conversion. A period has, perhaps, occurred in their history, when, by some impressive combination of circumstances, their fears were excited, and their consciences aroused. Eager to obtain relief from their guilty apprehensions, but unwilling to obtain it by the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ, they caught at some consoling promise of Scripture, or some imaginary change in their own feelings, as an evidence that their sins were forgiven. Under the opiate thus administered, their anxiety subsided, their distress passed away; and they mistook the quietude which succeeded, for the peace of reconciliation with God.

But, in which ever of these ways they have been induced to regard themselves as pious, the fact that they have done so, is replete with peril, and prophetic of ruin. Soothed by a groundless belief of safety, they have sunk into a slumber deep and unbroken as that of the sepulchre. And can any situation be more hazardous? What can awaken those who sleep under the potent anodyne, that their preparation for eternity is already accomplished? A lethargy, strong as death, has closed their ears, and blinded their eyes, and steeled their hearts. To every voice of warning, or of entreaty, they are insensible. Array before them all the thrilling statements of the Sacred Word, with respect to the guilt and danger of impenitent sinners, and all the expostulations, and commands, and threatenings, with which it urges them "to flee from the wrath to come." Do they feel the force of such an appeal? No; how can they? They do not view themselves as impenitent, and, consequently, consider the message as having no reference to their own case. Change your theme. Address them as professing Christians. Admonish them of their liableness to be deceived as to their interest in the Savior. Enforce the necessity of self-examination. Display the solemn truth, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and that it is the extreme of folly to presume they "are born of God," unless they daily live to his glory. Still they are unmoved. While the contrite and lowly "tremble at the word of the Lord," they remain without disquiet or alarm. No doubt, no misgiving, no suspicion of the unsoundness of their state, breaks the marble stillness of their repose. They silence every disturbing whisper with the fatal sophism, that,

because real Christians have exhibited occasional declensions, their own habitual worldliness is consistent with vital religion. Thus their false hope, "like the pointed rod that turns away the lightning," wards off from them, in every direction, the bolt of truth. Cased in complete mail, and intrenched on every side by "a refuge of lies," they are inaccessible to attack, and invulnerable to conviction. What, then, is the prospect that they will discover their mistake, before "their feet stumble upon the dark mountains," and they sink into hell? The Almighty, it is true, may yet undeceive and save them; but there is little reason to expect that he will. He has no where promised to do it; and both the Bible and observation prove, that the instances in which he has done it, are exceedingly rare. To no class of sinners does he afford less encouragement, and on none has he pronounced a more awful doom. He has declared that "their last state is worse than the first," and that their trust shall be "as the giving up of the ghost." The probability is, therefore, that they will continue to cherish their treacherous delusion, till the light of eternity shall dispel it, and the storm of divine wrath shall come to sweep away their sandy foundation, and overflow, as with a flood, their hiding place. Well, then, may it be said, that a fallacious persuasion of piety is, to those who indulge it, "an evident token of perdition."

II. *Another token, equally fearful, is a premature depravity.*—By this expression it is not my design to imply that all men are not naturally corrupt, but simply to indicate the *development* of that corruption. Though the principle of sin is inherent in every human bosom, it attains a more early and rank luxuriance in some cases than in others. Usually, its progress to flagrant wickedness is gradual. It is seldom, for example, that we see a youth of confirmed and incorrigible profligacy. Years of conflict with moral influences commonly pass away, and middle life or hoary age arrives, before such a character is formed. Instances of this kind, however, do sometimes occur; and it is to them that I now allude.

Methinks I see before me such a youth. He is the son of pious parents. Often, while an infant, they shed over him the tear of solicitude, and breathed an anxious prayer for his eternal happiness. As he grew up, they instilled into his opening mind the precepts of religion,—taught him to read the Scriptures, to bow at the family altar, and to pronounce, with his yet stammering lips, the name of Jesus. During the season of childhood, his sobriety of disposition, tenderness of conscience, and susceptibility of serious feeling, gave cheering promise that he would one day be made an heir of heaven. But the period arrived when he was removed from their watchful care. With their fervent supplications for his welfare, and many an earnest injunction not to forget their counsels, he went forth to tread alone the perilous mazes of the world, and to encounter its temptations. For a time he remained unscathed amid the polluting

atmosphere which encircled him. The force of parental instruction, and the endearing reminiscences of home, preserved him from the contagion of vice. But soon, by the continual friction of evil example, these salutary restraints were weakened. By insensible degrees he began to neglect his Bible, to remit his devotions, to turn away from the sanctuary, to shrink from the ridicule of his gay associates, and to listen, with less abhorrence, to their licentious language. The barriers of a virtuous education being thus overcome, he yielded to their solicitations, participated in their criminal indulgences, made merry over the sparkling wine, frequented the theatre, and revelled in the house of "her whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell." Advanced to this point in his headlong career, in order effectually to stifle the voice of admonition, and efface at once the lingering vestiges of former impressions, he next resorted to the haunts of infidelity, sat in the seat of the scoffer, and drank the deadly cup which grey-haired atheists mingle for their unwary victims. Having, by such a process, completed his degeneracy, and broken asunder all the bonds of conscience and religion, he now presents a melancholy example of precocious impiety. Though scarcely arrived at manhood, he is a veteran in guilt. With remorseless audacity, he tramples on every thing sacred and holy; makes a jest of his early convictions; sneers at moral principle; derides the solemn sanctions of inspiration; and defies the vengeance of the Eternal. And can we, while contemplating the immortal destiny of such an individual, perceive in it a single ray of hope? Must not the fact, that one so young in years is so old in sin, be deemed a mournful presage of reprobation? Do we not see the mark of "the pit" in every feature of his condition and character? Who can predict of him aught but an abandoned life, a miserable death, and an undone eternity? His deliverance from such a doom would be a miracle of mercy,—a departure from the ordinary course of converting grace, as astonishing as it is unfrequent. He has placed himself within the verge of a whirlpool that rarely gives back its prey; and though it is still in the compass of Omnipotence to draw him from its fatal power, there is far more cause to fear that, after a few rapid and giddy circles, he will go down the yawning vortex into the abyss of despair.

III. *Another token, of similar import, is an inveteracy in transgression.*—The almost invincible force of habit is a subject of universal remark. Small must be his acquaintance with men, who does not know that to relinquish what has become familiar to them by custom or association, is an effort of the highest difficulty. To change even a bodily attitude to which they are used, or to renounce a wonted corporeal gratification, is as arduous as it is painful. Their whole frame feels the alteration, and cries out against it. The same fact is still more apparent in their moral nature. When they have long followed a given course of conduct, the adoption of a contrary one is well nigh impossible. Hence it is obvious that a protracted persever-

ance in iniquity must render the repentance, and, consequently, the salvation of those who are guilty of it, fearfully dubious. In order to attain that vital union with Christ which is indispensable to forgiveness, there must be an entire abandonment of every unholy practice which a life of irreligion has generated and matured; for "they that are Christ's put off the old man and his deeds, and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." But to do this requires a seriousness of purpose, and a firmness of self-denial, which few will exercise. Even in cases where the sinful habit to be subdued is not of a flagitious kind, but consists merely in a uniform neglect of Christian duty, and a supreme attachment to the world; yet, when deep-rooted by time, its correction is nearly impracticable. It has grown with the growth of the unconverted man, strengthened with his strength, extended to all his plans of action and modes of thought, imbued all his feelings, interwoven itself with all his faculties, become the pervading element of his inward being; and thus has produced a fixedness of character, a hardness of heart, and an obstinacy of impenitence, which spread over his eternal prospects the gloom of night. Alas! how improbable it is that he will ever burst the fast-riveted bondage of such a state, and stand forth a disenthralled and regenerated child of God "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may he, who is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well."

But if this be true in the instance just supposed, incomparably more hopeless must be his condition, who has not only lived all his days in religious indifference, but has long travelled the broad highway of open immorality. What rational ground is there to expect the reformation of one who has, for years, been addicted to licentiousness or intemperance? At intervals, when the light of truth penetrates the thick darkness of his besotted mind, and conscience, startled by the intrusion, wakes her sleeping thunders, he may feel his captivity, and clank his chains, and struggle for release. But it comes not. Or if, for a time, it seem to be achieved, its continuance is momentary. The tyrant, to whom he has sold himself, remits his sway only to resume it with more terrific energy and a sterner despotism, when the season of alarm has passed. Like the "unclean spirit," so awfully described by our Savior, he returns from his temporary repulse with seven-fold strength, claims his victim with a decision inexorable as death, and binds him more firmly than ever in the iron fetters of his power. Who, without anguish, can contemplate the circumstances of such an individual? To see an immortal creature thus situated,—to behold him, by an infatuated persistence in sin, at length irreclaimably enslaved by it,—is a spectacle over which an angel might weep —"nay, it is one over which the Lord of angels has wept with unavailing compassion." Miserable man! by his own suicidal presumption he has flung himself into a torrent, whose black and swollen waters are rapidly hurrying him to destruction. He may resolve, and strive, and shriek for help, and make convulsive efforts to escape; but the impetuous stream still bears him onward. And now, as the

roar of the cataract strikes louder on his ear, and the wild waves foam and toss around him, he buffets the current with feebler stroke, and waning resolution, till despair flashes on his soul, and with a cry of horror that pierces the heavens, he is swept over the dizzy brink, and disappears.

IV. *Another token of perdition is a confirmed belief of destructive error.*—The confidence which the votaries of error repose in its delusions, is widely different in different persons. With some, it is little more than a cherished wish that their system were true, and an anxious endeavor to make it appear so, combined with many secret fears that it will prove to be false. Such usually exhibit a sensitiveness to attack, and a violence in repelling it, which indicate a lurking consciousness of the insecurity of their position, and show that they are not yet immovably fixed in it. Others manifest a more settled credence. By the constant repetition of sophistical arguments, they have so perverted their moral sense, as to "call evil good, and good evil," to "put darkness for light, and light for darkness," to confound the distinctions between sin and holiness, and to pursue the downward road to the pit, with an unfaltering trust that it will end amid the glories of the upper world. It is to this class that we refer, when we affirm that an establishment in fundamental error is the precursor of ruin. Take the case of the man, whose obliquity of heart has led him to impugn the justice of God, and to question the verity of future punishment, until he has, at last, fully embraced the monstrous doctrine, that all men, whatever their conduct here, will be alike happy hereafter,—and you will find, that to disabuse him of it, palpably baseless though it be, is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is a quality of the human mind, that what it long desires and strives to believe, it often, through a species of self-imposture, does believe, with a tenacity which no opposing evidence can overcome. It is thus with the individual we are describing. At first he only wished there were no retribution beyond the grave. He did not dare to presume there was none. But finding such a persuasion necessary to his repose in sin, he set himself, with untiring diligence, to acquire it. By silencing the voice of God within him;—by insulating the statements of the Bible, and wresting them from their connections;—by turning away from the teachers of truth to the guidance of those who cry "peace, when there is no peace,"—he, at length, attained the end so earnestly sought, and settled down on the fatal heresy that the final condemnation of the wicked is a fiction. To the conclusion thus formed he adheres with inflexible obstinacy. The love of ease, the pride of opinion, and, above all, the enmity of the carnal heart to the requirements of the Gospel, render him unwilling to perceive, that the structure, which he has erected with so much labor, and fortified with so much care, is "built on the sand." Conscious that if he discards the hypothesis on which he has adventured his immortal interests, he must either submit to the terms of sovereign mercy, or

remain without hope, he clings to it, as the drowning mariner clings to the sinking wreck, and resists, with the energy of desperation, every attempt to tear him from it. Place before him the unequivocal declarations of Scripture respecting the endless misery of those who die impenitent, and the fearful coincidence of these declarations with the decisions of reason, the history of the divine government, and the unutterable anxiety which the Son of God and all inspired men have felt in view of the doom of sinners. It affects him not. He evades the force of all these proofs by distorting their import, or denying their application. What, then, but the disclosures of eternity, can convince him that without repentance and faith in Christ, he must inevitably perish? If such a conviction ever is produced, while his day of probation continues, it must be effected through the instrumentality of divine truth, applied by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. But he has already repudiated the truth, and spurned, it is to be feared, beyond recall, the heavenly influence which alone can give it efficacy. And if this be so, where, I again ask, is the probability that he will be brought to see his peril, before his "redemption has ceased forever?" Jehovah has, we admit, sometimes arrested persons of this description, torn off the veil of falsehood from their eyes, broken up their league with death, and their covenant with hell, and made them the trophies of his victorious grace. But such conversions are exceptions to his general mode of procedure, and, therefore, can afford no assurance that a similar display of distinguishing mercy will be put forth in favor of the man whose case we are considering. On the contrary, every aspect of his condition and of his conduct presents appalling indications, that he is among the number of those on whom "God has sent a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, and be damned, because they believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." How dreadful, then, is a fixed reliance on the doctrine, that there is nothing for the ungodly to fear in a coming world! It is a placid but treacherous river, down which the credulous voyager glides serenely, lulled by the music of its waters, charmed by the beauty of its shores, and praising the smoothness of the current, which he fondly imagines is wafting him to the port of heaven,—till death dispels the hallucination, and he awakes in "the lake of fire."

V. *Another token of perdition is an unsanctified worldly prosperity.*—Irreligious men, in their blindness and infatuation, eagerly covet such prosperity, and deem it a signal proof of the divine regard. But no mistake can be greater. A fulness of sublunary good, when unaccompanied by piety, is to be considered a curse rather than a blessing, inasmuch as it presents an almost insuperable obstacle to the spiritual welfare of those who possess it. Instead of leading them, by the sweet impulse of gratitude, to adore and serve their munificent Benefactor, and, in this manner, preparing them for the enjoyment of his presence in heaven, it more generally stupefies their

consciences, hardens their hearts, engrosses every faculty of their minds and every affection of their souls with a sordid idolatry of perishing vanities, and thus affords an alarming premonition that their earthly felicity is but the prelude to an eternity of torment. That such is often the effect produced by a successful pursuit of secular objects, is abundantly evident from the testimony of facts. In every age of the Church, instances of conversion among the fortunate devotees of wealth and honor have been "like angel's visits, few and far between." While the lowly children of poverty and sorrow have repaired, in crowds, to the arms of that compassionate Redeemer who invites the weary and heavy laden to find rest in his bosom,—the vast majority of the prosperous, the opulent, and the great, despising his salvation, have continued to bask in splendor, to riot in affluence, and to live at ease in their possessions, till their pomp, and luxury, and pleasure have been exchanged for the woes of hell. Nor is it from observation alone that the truth of this statement appears. It is solemnly and explicitly taught in the unerring records of inspiration. Listen to its awful language with respect to the final state of the favored votaries of worldliness. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Behold, these are the ungodly that prosper in the world. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, till I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castest them down into destruction." If such be the influence of worldly prosperity, how unspeakably dangerous is the situation of those, who climb its giddy steep, unprotected by religion.

VI. *Another token of perdition, is apathy of mind under divine chastisement.*—The afflictions which so often cast a shade over the lot of mortals, are not the product of accident, or of any fortuitous concurrence of secondary causes. They all proceed from the benevolent Sovereign of the universe and are designed to bring back his revolted subjects to the allegiance which they owe him. And this result they are pre-eminently adapted to accomplish. In none of the means, which God uses to reclaim transgressors, does he approach them with so close a contact, or address them in such tones of power. Their infliction is the highest effort of infinite compassion—the reserved agency to which it applies, when all the resources of goodness and forbearance have been expended in vain. And yet how many are there, on whom even this instrument has been employed without effect, and in whose unrelenting bosoms the rebuke of Jehovah has produced no compunction. What hope, then, is there, that any

thing, in the whole circle of moral influences, will ever bring them into cordial obedience to the cross of Christ? A slight view of the course which God has already pursued with them, will show that such an event is exceedingly doubtful. At first, He loaded them with the gifts of his beneficence, crowned their life with blessings, surrounded them with religious privileges, and sought, by all the subduing appeals of kindness, to overcome their impenitence, and restore them to duty and to heaven. But they were unaffected by his mercies. His benevolence did not warm them into love, nor his tenderness melt them into contrition. They became insolent in their abundance, and said, "who is the Lord, that we should serve him?" All the motives derived from his munificence and long suffering having thus proved unavailing, He next began to press them with adversity. He dried up the streams of his bounty, blighted their worldly expectasions, scattered their treasures to the winds, and turned into darkness their visions of pride and glory. Still they were unchecked. They thought a chance had happened to them. Or if they acknowledged the hand of God in their disappointments, it was only to repine at his dealings. He then came nearer to them, removed the objects of their affection, and "took away the desire of their eyes with a stroke." But the visitation excited only the natural anguish of a bereaved heart, mingled with a bitter irreconciliation to the allotments of Providence. They did not consider their ways, nor inquire why they were stricken, but murmured and rebelled under the blow. Like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, they grew more restiff and perverse, as the pressure increased. At length, to finish the process of correction, God laid his chastening hand on themselves, smote them with sickness, appointed them days of weariness and nights of pain, brought them to the verge of the tomb, and into the precincts of eternity, that the near view of its terrors might awaken them from the slumber of sin. And yet even this dispensation was unheeded. They felt no dismay, they uttered no prayer, while the fierce pangs of disease thrilled through their frame, and death stood knocking at the door of their mortal tabernacle, threatening every moment, to lay it in the dust. Or if they experienced any alarm, no sooner did the crisis pass, and the day of doom appear to recede, and leave them a longer interval of grace, than they banished their disquietude, and relapsed into their former carelessness. And now, having resisted all the discipline of the Most High, until, wearied by their stubbornness, he has ceased to disturb them, they manifest a stupidity more profound than ever, and sin without restraint or fear. As fire hardens clay, so the furnace of affliction has burned them into more impenetrable obduracy. Is there, then, reason to expect that they will yield to any future means of conversion? Is it likely that they will hereafter be placed in scenes and circumstances more calculated to arouse them than those in which they have already been placed? What can impress and soften hearts on which the rod of the Almighty has fallen and left no scar? Though it is not for us to foretell their fate, but to leave

them to the disposal of that God, whose love they have slighted, and whose judgments they have despised; still we cannot avoid the apprehension, that in them the terrific threatening of insulted mercy will be verified, "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

VII. *Another token of perdition, is a return to insensibility after serious impressions.*—There are multitudes who exhibit this characteristic. During some revival of religion, or under the searching expostulations of some pungent sermon, they have been awakened from their natural state of thoughtless security. Their sins have been set in order before them. They have been made to see the importance of an interest in Christ to their present and eternal happiness. They have felt something of the power of the world to come, have shuddered in view of their approaching condemnation, and, in anguish of soul, resolved to attend to their immortal welfare. But their convictions are now effaced, and their resolutions forgotten. By yielding to the drowsy influence of the world, and the strong propensity of the unregenerate heart to repel religious subjects,—by lingering and procrastinating, instead of immediately submitting to God,—by seeking some other source of hope than an unconditional compliance with the overtures of the Gospel;—they have obliterated every trace of serious feeling, and sunk into ten-fold indifference. How improbable, then, is their salvation! Every view, which can be taken of their state, conspires to prove that their peril must be extreme. Their very tranquillity is the harbinger of destruction. It is the ease of the expiring patient when raging inflamation terminates in gangrene. It is the repose of the sleeping volcano—the calm which precedes the hurricane—the stupor into which conscience sinks when the palsy of spiritual death begins to settle upon the soul. To all the applications of truth and strivings of the Spirit they are impregnable. No exhibition of the claims of God and of their own duty can be presented to them with which they are not already familiar. No argument, no incentive, no entreaty, can be brought to bear upon their minds, which they have not already disregarded. Nothing, therefore, but a miraculous interposition of sovereign grace can pluck them from the precipice on which they stand. And will such an interposition be made? It may; but the general testimony of experience is against the supposition. It is an indubitable fact, that very few of those who, from a state of religious solicitude, decline into apathy, are ever truly converted. Some of them may, at times, manifest symptoms of returning seriousness. When the power of God comes down on the communities in which they reside, and Christians are active and faithful, and sinners are bowing to the cross, and the Redeemer rides forth in his chariot of victory,—they may start from their slumber, mix with the moving host, and seem to be pressing towards the gates of Zion. Still, they seldom make their way to Christ. More commonly, after a fruitless effort to resuscitate their strangled convictions, they relin-

quish the attempt, and resign themselves to the mighty lethargy that enchains them. Like Esau, having suffered the season for securing the blessing to pass unimproved, they find "no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears." But while a small number of the class we are describing may thus evince an occasional and transient concern for their eternal interest, by far the larger portion display an utter recklessness, and, by plunging into dissipation or infidelity, give fearful evidence that the convincing and renewing Spirit has irrevocably departed from them. Thus, "as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But that "convenient season" never came. Abandoned of God, he surrendered himself to profligacy, was arraigned at the bar of Cæsar for his atrocious practices, banished into Gaul, and there died an irreclaimable reprobate. Such is the melancholy history of thousands, who were once anxious and thoughtful, and appeared to have reached the very borders of the kingdom of heaven; but who, by trifling with their impressions, and delaying to comply with offered mercy, have flung themselves far off from hope, and perished in their sins. In awful accordance with this remark, an Apostle has declared, that "if those, who have once been enlightened, shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them to repentance." Surely, then, if the condition of persons of this character be thus desperate, we may, with an emphasis of meaning, say to them, as our Lord said to Jerusalem, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thine eyes."

VIII. *The last token of perdition, which I shall notice, is an impenitent old age.*—The young, I am well aware, are often encouraged to postpone repentance, from a persuasion that they shall become pious in the decline of life, and that that period is more favorable to the attainment of religion than any other. But no expectation can be more delusive. Among the innumerable situations of guilt and danger, in which infatuated mortals place themselves, there are none so forlorn of hope,—so destitute of every cheering promise, as an irreligious old age. The physical powers at that season, are enfeebled and bowed down with the weight of years. The blood flows sluggishly through the shrivelled veins—the muscles are relaxed—the strength fails—the spirits droop—the limbs totter—the step is faltering and slow—the eye, the ear, refuses its office—and the whole frame is oppressed with incurable maladies, and sunk in decrepitude. With this decay of body there is a sympathetic and equal decay of mind. The understanding loses its acuteness, and the memory its retention, and the imagination its buoyancy; the love of enterprise, the vigor of purpose, the courage to encounter difficulties, are gone; and the noble intellect, which once soared abroad and exulted in its might, is reduced to the imbecility of childhood, and waits, in puny helplessness,

the fall of its shattered cell. Nor is this all. The corrosion of time is still more visible in the moral faculties. The conscience is seared, the sensibilities are blunted—the affections are benumbed—the heart is cauterized—and the entire character has acquired an almost invincible stubbornness. How feeble, then, is the prospect that a saving change will be wrought in the man who has thus grown grey in transgression, and on whom all the means of grace have hitherto been employed in vain. Even in the case of those who appear to feel some desire to obtain a preparation for heaven, ere their setting sun shall go down in death, there is such a languor of effort, such an inability to comprehend and remember instruction, and such a fixedness of sinful habits, as well nigh to preclude success. But the great mass of aged sinners feel no such desire. They have long ceased to have any anxiety about their spiritual welfare. They seem scarcely to consider that the soul can be lost, that an eternity of bliss or of wo is before them, or that the hour of their departure for it is near. They cling to the trifles of earth with all the fondness of their early days, clutch their cankered gold in their shaking hands as eagerly as if they were to remain here forever, and manifest no concern, but to secure as much of the world as they can, before the waning lamp of life is extinguished in the darkness of the grave. Oh, it is enough to break the benevolent heart to see a hoary-headed transgressor tottering on the verge of the fathomless gulf, and yet reckless of his impending doom, till his feet slide, and he vanishes in the depths of despair!

Thus have I endeavored to set before you some of those traits in the character of several classes of unregenerate men which render their salvation improbable. In this enumeration, I have by no means included all which might, with propriety, have been embraced in it. But those which have been mentioned are surely sufficient to prove that the spiritual circumstances of vast numbers among the unconverted are solemnly critical.

It is not from any love of such a theme, or from any delight in harrowing up your feelings, that I have been induced to present this topic. God is my witness, that every part of it has been prepared and delivered with a bleeding heart. At the description of each fearful token, I could have sat down and wept, in anguish of spirit, over those who exhibit it. No; it is not because I, a guilty sinner, find pleasure in portraying the perils of my fellow-sinners, that I have called your attention to this subject; but because I, a pardoned sinner,—a sinner from whom numberless marks of perdition have been washed away by the blood of Christ,—would urge you, by the terrors of an impenitent state, to repair to that wondrous fountain, of which I know the efficacy.

On every side, I see crowds of immortal beings growing callous under the means of grace, piling up mountains in their way to heaven, and displaying, in their increasing heedlessness, more clear and mournful signs, that "lost!" "lost!" will soon be inscribed on the

portals of their dwelling. And can I be unaffected—can I be silent—or utter only the notes of peace over a scene like this? No; my soul is moved within me. "Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night" for the dying and the dead around me. I stand in this "valley of dry bones" and cry, "Hear ye the word of the Lord. Tremble, ye that live carelessly; rise up and be afraid, ye thoughtless ones; for when ye say, peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh, and ye shall not escape." "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall your poverty come as one that travelleth, and your want as an armed man."

Do any say, It is not possible that the situation of the impenitent should be so alarming, so inconceivably terrible, as it has now been described? Why, then, do the Oracles of Truth uniformly represent it in this aspect? Why have all the inspired servants of God manifested such agonizing solicitude in view of the criminality and danger of irreligious men? Why did the Psalmist exclaim, "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved;"—"rivers of waters run down mine eyes;"—"horror hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked?" Why did an Apostle declare, "I have continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart—for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh?" And why is there joy in heaven,—why does a fresh tide of rapture spread through all the angelic hosts—when even one sinner repents? Those lofty intelligences, free from the mists and illusions of earth, and dwelling in the pure light of eternity, must know, far better than we, what is the real state of the careless and worldly; and did they not see it to be one of tremendous jeopardy, would they deem the event, which delivers from it, worthy of calling forth such seraphic delight? Oh, then, trust not your own vain imaginations, but believe the infallible word of the Savior, when he assures you, solemnly and plainly, that "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If you will not be convinced by this accumulated testimony,—if you refuse to give heed to the warning which has now been addressed to you,—you will evince, in your indifference to it, another token of perdition, far more dreadful than any which I have previously enumerated. No truth can be set before you more adapted to break up your sinful slumbers, and dispel your false security, than that which this discourse has exhibited. There is nothing in the whole compass of Scripture more appalling; and were it once to be brought home to your hearts, the trumpet of the judgment could not more effectually arouse you. And shall it not arouse you? Can you look, without alarm, upon the fearful picture of your condition which the Divine pencil has drawn? Can you continue unmoved, while you see it clearly proved from the teachings of inspiration, that your final ruin is awfully probable? Oh, ye undying spirits! ye heirs of eternity! Ye hardened and presumptuous sinners! upon whom the precursors of condemnation are gathering thick and dark;—will you refuse to believe that

you are in danger of hell, till you feel its unquenchable fires blazing around you?

Do you reply, If our escape from the wrath to come be thus improbable, it will avail nothing to attempt it; we will, therefore, dismiss at once all concern respecting our future destiny, and giving ourselves up to the pursuits and vanities of the world, enjoy life while we can? Enjoy life! And can life be enjoyed, while such a doom, like the naked sword suspended above the couch of the ancient reveller, is hanging over you, and may, at any moment, fall, and plunge you into the abyss? What! Enjoy life while God is forgotten, the Savior rejected, probation passing away, and the gulf of eternal wo opening beneath your feet! Well may we say of such pleasure, "It is madness." It is far more insane than the mirth of the criminal who, condemned to die, and waiting the hour of execution, strives to banish his fears by singing and dancing, or drowns them in the stupor of intoxication. There is no necessity that you should resort to this desperate expedient; for, although your destruction is probable, it is not yet inevitable; and nothing but your own obstinate continuance in sin can render it so. Your case would indeed be hopeless,—the marks of perdition upon you would be ineffaceable,—were there not an Almighty Redeemer who is both able and willing to grant you his aid. While, therefore, you abandon all expectation of saving yourselves, go, in humility and faith, to his throne of grace, and fervently implore his omnipotent succor. Tell him that you have destroyed yourselves by rebellion against him; that, with suicidal folly, you have raised impassable barriers between your souls and the mansions of his love; that you do not deserve his compassion, and might justly be left to perish forever. In this way alone can deliverance be obtained. But a step so self-abasing I fear your proud and obdurate hearts will not consent to take. I fear that whatever apprehensions you may now feel will soon subside, and be succeeded by a still deeper lethargy. This I cannot prevent. I have no power to arrest the raging disease which is fast hurrying you to the "second death." I can only sit down beside you, and watch your moral symptoms, and weep as I contemplate their increasing violence, and breathe forth my earnest prayers to that great Physician who alone can remove them. To him I invite you. Seek him while he may be found. Seek him, ere yet the distemper of sin shall be beyond remedy, and mercy shall depart, and hope shall expire, and the "recording Angel," with a pen dipped in "the wine of the wrath of God," shall write on your foreheads, "INCURABLE."

SERMON CCCLII.

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ROCHESTER, NEW YORK.

ESTIMATES OF LIFE.

"For what is your life."—James iv. 14.

To reflect, to consider his ways, to draw from the past, lessons for the guidance of the future, this is one of the highest prerogatives of man. This it is that raises him above the brutes, and enables him to make all that is gone, tributary—subservient, to all that is to come.

And there are seasons peculiarly fitted for this work—*resting-points* in the journey of life, from which, if we are wise, we shall rigidly scrutinize the past, and seriously plan for the future—resolving to make, for that future, more of life, to live to better purposes—for higher, and nobler, and better ends, than we ever before have done.

Such, for example, is the day of our birth, at every return of which we should remember that then we commenced a deathless existence, and should ask ourselves how we are living—what we are doing as moral beings, and whether we are making that existence a blessing or a curse. Such, too, is every Sabbath, breaking in as it does upon the business and turmoil of the world—giving us a breathing space, as spiritual beings, and whispering to us of higher and holier things, and of our immortality. And such, especially, is the opening of every successive year, when the months of the past one have fled, each bearing with it the record of our sins, our follies, and our neglects, to write them in the judgment book.

At every such season, we are resting, as it were, for a moment, on some hill-top of probation. From it we clearly see the year that has gone. Its wasted hours rise up, like an accusing conscience, to reprove us. Its departed dead gaze upon us face to face. Its trials and

sorrows gush up afresh to our hearts, reminding us that "the past—the past, we never can forget." Its broken resolutions, its wasted opportunities, its misimproved privileges, the little progress we have made in self-improvement, the little we have done for God, or self, or the world; all these come over us, each with its pangs to our hearts, and in bitterness we could weep at the thoughts that, like scorpion stings, are piercing our inmost souls.

Such, to every reflecting mind, and with greater or less intensity, are somewhat the views which the flight of time suggests. And often are such ready to exclaim, "O! that I could go back,—that I could live over the years that are gone, that I might spend them differently, and to better purposes than they have been spent." But even if this were possible, it might not be best. And the only test of your sincerity in desiring it, is, how will you spend the future? If you really wish that the days now gone were again your own, that you might improve them to the utmost, then you will now begin, and will continue to live for days to come, as you think you would for the past, if that again were in your power. You will act on the wise suggestion, "Look not mournfully to the past; it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present; for it is thine. Go forth to meet the future, with holy purpose, and a resolute and manly heart; for thus you may make it your own." You will ponder the lessons which departed and coming years suggest, striving to make the most of them all. Of the multitudes of these lessons which might be suggested, several are brought to our view in the inquiry of our text—the solemn and pertinent inquiry, "What is your life?" On this question, in several of its aspects, it may be profitable to dwell. And,

I. *What is your life in its duration?*—It is short, very short. It is spoken of as a moment, as but a hand's breadth; and so, if you reflect, you will find it. Go ask the aged if their years have not fled like a dream, and their reply will tell you how short, in the review, life seems to them. Compare the whole of even the longest life with the endless years of eternity, and it will appear but as a drop to the fathomless ocean. Think of it in its actual duration, or its rapid progress; consider how much is given to infancy, and sleep, and rest, and sickness, and how much is wasted in idleness or worse than idleness, and it will seem to be speeding as on the lightning's wing. Estimate it by the rapid flight of its enjoyments or its sorrows, both of which pass like shadows or dreams;—by its hopes that delude, or its plans that mock us;—by its purposes, so few of which we fulfil, or its intended attainments, so few of which we ever make, and it will seem as but a moment. Go and measure it at the bed of death; take its dimensions by the guage of the sepulchre;—look back from your last hour, and see how rapidly the whole of life has gone, and you will be amazed at its brevity—amazed to see how soon, from you, it has passed forever! From all these estimates you will feel, perhaps with mournful weight,—certainly with deep conviction, that life, in its dura-

tion, is very short; that it flies like a dream,—that it speeds like the wind.

II. *What is your life in its security?* — It is uncertain; — at any moment your hold on it may be loosed, and it may be gone forever. In allusion to the remark of David, that "there is but a step between us and death," most strikingly has it been said, "that the whole course of life is ever parallel,—side by side with death; that death is not a precipice at a distance, toward which we are gradually coming, and over which we must bye and bye plunge, but a precipice, on the very brink of which we are all the while walking, and over which at any instant we may fall." We are ever on the verge of life, always on the confines of eternity, always close upon the judgment, within a single step either of heaven or hell! And between the path we tread and the gulf by our side, there is no barrier to guard us— nothing to save us from falling—as others have fallen, at every point of that path. There is no certainty in your life. A single breath may blight, or an insect undermine it. A very moth may sever some one of the thousand cords that bind you to exisence, or disease may breathe upon you, and you are gone! It is only to shut out a little air; only to let in some floating atom to rankle in your vitals; only to touch you with the finger of sickness, and all will soon be over, and your health, and bloom, and hopes will perish together in the grave. The Word of God declares, and every day confirms it, that life is of all things the most uncertain. Like the dew on the grass, it is exhaled in a moment. Like the leaf, before the autumn's breath, it fades ere we think it. Like the vapor, the cloud, the dream, it is gone. Like the wave it passes while we behold it. Like the flower it withers and dies; and, as in the twinkling of an eye, we are in eternity!

III. *What is your life in its objects?*—God has given, and he is continuing your days for high and important ends. He is sparing you in life that in it you may prepare for your entire existence: that you may put away the moral stain, and break from the ruling power of sin; that you may turn to the ways of holiness, and seek his favor, and enter his service; that by his grace you may elevate and improve and ennoble your entire nature; that as physical, mental, social, and moral beings, you may aim at the highest possible perfection and strive for it, with all diligence and prayerfulness, with all your own, and all of God's imparted strength. Life is the only season in which to mould yourself for immortality, to fix your grasp on heaven, to make God your friend; the only season for doing or getting good, for blessing your fellow men, and taking them with you to the skies. These are the great objects of life; and when it is once ended they can never be secured. The victory once unwon, it never can be gained: the prize once lost, it can never be recovered. To all eternity you may weep and lament it, but tears and lamentations will

then be in vain. *Now*, time may be improved and the great objects for which it is continued, may be attained; but once ended, its opportunities will rise again only to haunt you forever! And these alternatives,—fearful and momentous as they are—these are at the mercy of every passing moment. Whether all the high ends of existence shall be gained, or whether you shall fail to secure them, all this is at the hazard of life's uncertainty—at the hazard of its brevity. If they are not now secured, it is more than possible they never will be—more than possible that your life may pass away, and none of them ever be yours!

IV. *What is your life in its influence upon yourself?*—We have seen what are the great intended objects and ends of life. As life progresses are you gaining these ends? Are you making them your own? The world in which we live—the scenes that surround us are full of changes. And these changes, as they pass, never leave us as we were before. "Every one of them, like the thousand imperceptible touches by which time mellows a picture or eats into a ruin, leaves its trace behind it—here a stain and there a lustre; here adding strength and there working decay; here corroding the very heart, and there consolidating and coating it with a hard and imperishable shell." At every moment, life as it passes, is stamping us with its influence—moulding us for better or worse, for endless life or endless death. There is not one of its passing moments; not an incident that occurs, or a friend that we meet; not a thought that springs up in the silence of the soul; not an obligation that is pondered; not a joy that cheers, or a sorrow that rends the heart, but by it we are changed as moral beings: not one of these, or of all the countless influences of life, of which it is not true, that it is to us, either "a savor of life unto life or of death unto death." From our very character as moral beings, it cannot be otherwise than that at every moment we are making progress—that by every step we are pressing on either to life or death eternal. According to our use or abuse, our improvement or misimprovement of every incident and event of life, (for every one is a means of grace,) we are rising or sinking as moral beings. In a higher, and a far more fearful sense than the ancient artist, every one of us is "*painting for eternity*"—painting, each his own portrait, stroke by stroke, and line by line. And soon the image shall be finished; and when finished, it shall be hung up for our own gaze, and for the inspection of the universe—every part of it to grow brighter and brighter, or darker and darker forever! In eternity we shall see that no touch of life, no contact of probation was neutral in its influence; that by every one we made ourselves either better or worse; that each was like the falling water to us, drop by drop wearing away our hardness, or drop by drop, like that which falls in the dark caverns of the earth, casing us with incrustations of stone! And if all this be so, then,

V. *What is your life in its responsibilities?*—Every object—every influence of life implies responsibility. Every moment is inwoven with obligation to God and to your own soul. On every part of it is written, "occupy till I come," "for this you are to give account." For all that life brings with it:—for the improvement or misimprovement of every opportunity and privilege; for time, that it be redeemed and wisely spent; for property, that we sacredly use it as God's stewards; for our talents and influence, that they be so employed as to afford us joy at the day of judgment; for every thought, and word, and deed; for every mercy and every trial, for all these we are responsible—under obligation—and soon to be called to account before the judge of quick and dead. How solemn, and fearful even, is this aspect of life, showing us, as it does, that all we do and all we fail to do—that every act and every omission, is written in the book of God, and for it we are soon to be judged! This, then, suggests another, and the last inquiry,

VI. *What is your life, or rather what will it be in its results?*—Fleeting as it is, uncertain and soon to end, what will be its end to you? And the response is, that the end of probation is retribution—that its result to you will be either heaven or hell. God has left it to your own choice, whether by loving and serving him, you will make life the passway to salvation or perdition. One of the two it *must* be; and *which*, God permits you to choose, warning you that by that choice you are to abide forever! Repent of your transgressions as a violator of God's law; believe in Christ as your Redeemer; live a life of faith, humility, love, and prayer, of self-denying and active holiness; put away every evil feeling, and wrong habit, and sinful action; cultivate your immortal nature by the rules of eternal truth; live for God in all things; do this, and when life is ended, as soon it shall be, heaven shall be your portion. Its crown and its harp shall be yours, and yours its joys that are unspeakable and full of glory. But neglect and put away all this,—go on in your disregard of God and his law; do violence to the better dictates of your own nature; heed not the calls and reproofs of conscience; turn away from the cross of Christ, and live not as God requires, and soon, as your life shall end, you shall go down to endless death, where in bitterness, but in vain, you shall wish that you had never lived, only to give point by life itself to the sting of death eternal to your soul. Remember, O! remember this, heir of immortality, that this life is your only probation, and all beyond it is retribution; that here only you are to sow, and hereafter to reap, either a harvest of glory or a harvest of death. Impress it upon your heart that this life is the threshhold of eternity; it can be passed but once; a little care in passing it, and you are safe forever. It is the infancy of a deathless existence; a little watchfulness, and the manhood of your immortality is all that you could wish. But ah! if you will stumble as you pass that threshhold,—if you will waste the childhood of your endless

being, and that too when you are warned against it, then will your eternity be one of fearfulness and lamentation and wo! To all eternity you will mourn that your "harvest is past, your summer is ended, and your soul is not saved!"

Such is your life! In its end, in its results; it is either heaven or hell to you. In its obligations, it throws around you the responsibilities of obedience or disobedience to God, and of salvation or perdition to yourself. Its great objects, as designed and enjoined by God, are, that you prepare for holiness and usefulness and heaven; and you bless others, and honor Christ, and work out your own salvation. In all its progress, by all its influence, it is moulding you for these ends, or for their fearful reverse. In its duration, it is, at longest, but very short, and even in its brevity it is uncertain; for at any moment it may be ended, bearing us, in its flight, to the judgment and all the retributions of eternity!

If then these things be so, how does it become us to live; how to pass the days of our sojourning here in fear, when they are so fast flying, and their issues are so momentous. If salvation or perdition is depending on our present moments and conduct, then how earnest should we be, first of all, to do the great work of life, to make God our friend, to lay up our treasure in heaven! If our life, by all its influences, at every step of its progress, is leaving an eternal impress on us; if by every incident, and at every moment, we are moulded for life or death eternal, then how sacredly diligent should we be, wisely to improve by all, by every thing to mount to heaven, and not to sink to despair. If life too is so uncertain, and we have no sure hold upon it, then what madness to live with its great work undone, and with the wrath of God hanging over us, when any moment may close our probation, leaving that work undone forever, and that wrath our endless portion! And if our life, at the longest, is so very short, then how earnestly should we redeem it, making the utmost of its hours while still they are continued to us! How should we guard ourselves against the waste of time, which is the waste of our own existence! How should we grasp "the present moment as it flies, and stamp the marks of wisdom on its wings, and like the good old patriarch of God's word, hold the fleet angel fast until he bless us!"

Our time is short. We are warned of it by the voice of inspired truth. We are warned of it by the flight of years, which, with all our follies and errors and sins, have gone to chronicle their record in the judgment book. Especially we are warned of it by the grave, that "pulpit of departed man, from which he speaks, his text and doctrine both, 'Thou too must die, and come to judgment.'" From the graves of departed friends or relatives, torn from us in years that are past; the child from the parent, and the parent from the child, the brother from the sister, and the sister from the brother, the husband from the wife, and the friend from the friend;—from all these comes back the monition, that *our* time is short—that *we* too must soon follow.

And the only safety is in being ever ready, that whenever death shall come, we may meet it with joy and not with grief. Come it will, to us, and that very soon.

"Whether we smile or weep,
Time wings his flight.
Days—hours—they never creep—
Life speeds like light!—

Whether we laugh or groan,
Seasons change fast.
Nothing hath ever flown,
Swift as the past.

Whether we chafe or chide,
On is time's pace.
Never his noiseless step
Doth he retrace.

Speeding, still speeding on,
How, none can tell,
Soon will he bear us
To heaven or to hell.

Dare not, then, waste thy days,
Reckless and proud,
Lest, while you dream it not,
Time spread thy shroud!"

Lest while you think not of his coming, the King of Terrors may be upon you, and you wake from the heedlessness and the dreams of time, to the realities of the final judgment and a lost eternity!

The opening year is a time for solemn reviews, serious reflections, and holy resolutions. These urge the importance of holier views of life, and corresponding purposes of living; to begin the redemption of the past, which is lost, by improving, and thus lengthening the future that remains; to search your hearts, to ask how you are living, and how you may live to better purpose, and to determine by God's grace to do it. Old or young, high or low, rich or poor, christian or impenitent, whoever you may be, *now* is the time to begin to live for higher ends, with holier hearts, with eternity more in your view, than ever yet you have done. Is God the witness that this is your purpose—that, his grace assisting you, it shall also be your performance?

A few years since, a minister, in a neighboring State, supposed he had ascertained from prophecy, that the world would come to an end, and the Son of Man descend on a given day, which he named to his people. So fully and earnestly did he believe and preach this, that others began to believe it, and his meetings were thronged with those who, in the deepest solemnity, hung upon the truth he proclaimed. Christians were roused to a living, fervent zeal, and the impenitent, alarmed, in numbers began to ask what they should do to be saved. At last, the day on which he had fixed arrived. It was the Sabbath,

and to a dense mass of breathless immortals, and with full conviction on his part, he announced that on that day the Son of Man would descend, and come to judgment. The sermon was heard with weeping, and terror, and fear; and the breathless solemnity of that house no tongue could fully tell. The day, however, of course passed on, and the sun went down in calmless, showing that the preacher had utterly mistaken the meaning of the prophets. And yet if he had not, and if that day the Son of Man had descended, every one would have said that the earnestness of that congregation—that their anxiety to be prepared for the judgment was most reasonable, and that the reverse would have been the deepest folly—the sheerest madness! The judgment may be as near to *you* as *they* thought it was to them.—Another year or month, another week, another day, may bear you to it.

With this probability, then, before us, let us do with our might what our hands find to do, and do it now while yet we may. Let us be less anxious to live, than to live well; to live as we ought,—as God requires.

Thus shall we ever be ready for the coming of the Son of Man, and when we are called away, it will only be to our rest—to the paradise above.

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SERMON CCCLIII.

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A PERPETUAL REVIVAL.

"The Lord is with you while ye be with him."—2 Chron. xv. 2.

This is a part of the message which the Lord sent to Asa and his army as they were returning in triumph after their battle with the Ethiopians. Soon after the pious King ascended the throne, and began to break up the idolatrous practices of the people, war was waged against him by Zerah at the head of the Ethiopians. An host of a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots came out against him. King Asa cried unto the Lord for help, and went forth leaning upon his almighty arm. He gained the victory over his numerous and powerful enemies; and now on his return home, he is told how he may continue to enjoy the favor of that Being who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight,—"And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and he said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while ye be with him." The King and his subjects are thus taught how they may continue to enjoy the presence and blessing of God their Savior. This is a precious truth for God's people in every age. It is applicable to us.

The Lord has been among this church and people of late. He hath blessed the labors of his faithful children, and caused them to result in the hopeful conversion of some souls. Some that were enemies have been taken captive, and led to the feet of Jesus. They were made willing in the day of God's power. By the manifestations of his presence, his power, and his grace, the Lord hath made many of you glad. And now the question is,—Shall the blessed

work of the Divine Spirit go forward? Shall the Lord remain among us? Shall He walk in us, and dwell in us, and be our God, and we be his people? Shall we have a perpetual revival? Shall we feed the fire that has been kindled on God's altar, so that it shall burn with increasing brightness as long as we live? Say not that this is too much. The word of prophecy declares that such a state is before the church, and why not come into it now? The progress of God's kingdom in the frequent outpourings of the Spirit, vouchsafed to the church within the last twenty years, should lead us to labor for, and expect great things of the Lord—even such a revival as shall last till the end of time. Indeed, there are some churches already that, for years together, have not passed a communion season without having some added to their numbers. The dews of heaven have been gently distilling, and the fruits of righteousness continually springing forth. Why may it not be so with all our churches, and that till the world's redemption is accomplished?

My subject this morning, is *a perpetual revival of religion.* By a perpetual revival, I mean such a state of the church as shall secure the presence of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of his continued operations.

I. *This is desirable.*

All who are the children of God must, it seems to me, be united in this. A genuine revival of religion spreads the atmosphere of heaven around. The church that is baptized and pervaded by the spirit of it, much resembles the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. Those who go forth, like King Asa, trusting in the Lord, and holding communion with him, are richly blessed. Their peace is like a river, and their righteousness like the waves of the sea. Satan, for the time, flees from them; temptation has little or no power over them. To them the Bible, with all its instructions and promises, is very precious. They are prepared to say of this book of God:—"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." It is the theme of their meditation all the day long. Heaven seems very near to them; its holy objects they dwell upon with great delight. The things of this world no longer perplex them with cares, nor charm them with fancied good. In the work of the Lord they have great delight. They go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. O, how desirable it is to continue in such a frame—to dwell under the shadow of the Almighty! How desirable thus to live above the world, having our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. How desirable to have such fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, month after month, and year after year—even till we drop this earthly house of our tabernacle and go up to dwell in a brighter world. How desirable to live evermore devoted to that service which returns to us a rich reward even while engaged in it. "Be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in

the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord;"—not in vain, if your own spiritual prosperity alone be considered.

The health and growth of such as have been recently born of God, require a state of devotedness on the part of the church. Great responsibility rests on us with reference to them. Being guided and assisted by the Holy Spirit in our prayers and efforts, we have had, as we hope, great influence in bringing them to Christ. To those who have been their spiritual fathers, they will naturally look for example and direction. But how can we illuminate their path with the light of a holy life, if *the Lord be not with us?* And how can we instruct them aright, when we refuse ourselves to listen any longer to the heavenly Teacher? If we grieve away the blessed Spirit—lose the true revival spirit, we shall ourselves walk in darkness. We shall be blind leaders of those who look to us for help in their spiritual infancy. If we go away from God, we ourselves shall feed on nothing better than husks and gravel; and how shall we be able to feed those who are babes in Christ, with the sincere milk of the word? If we would be useful to souls, after having travailed in birth for them, we must cherish the presence of God. Many a church, after a season of refreshing, has sunk down into coldness and apathy, and starved her spiritual children. Hence it is that we find so many dwarfs in the family of Christ. The church becomes worldly, and neglects her children:—refuses to cherish, feed and clothe them; and were it not for the *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*, they would die. But He gathers them in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and keeps them alive, in spite of the neglect and cruelty of their mother—*the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

If a young convert is to be healthy, vigorous, growing, and useful, he must be cherished in the bosom of a warm-hearted church. He must be remembered in the prayers of that church, receive the benefit of her counsels, and be cheered on by her shining example. Old and experienced soldiers always give character to the army. They stand in the first ranks, and by their courage and fidelity, incite others to deeds of noble daring. Well tried soldiers of the Cross, how desirable is it for the sake of those who have just enlisted, that you always stand firm at your post, and *fight manfully the good fight of faith!*

A perpetual revival is desirable for the good of the church. When a revival of religion commences, but few at first are found to be engaged in it; but few feel the worth of souls, and pray and labor for their salvation; but few in the prayer-meeting, and by personal efforts, show that they are prepared for the work of the Lord. But as the good work advances, what a change comes over the church. One professor and another who had backslidden, so far as to live even without the forms of godliness, is quickened to newness of life. The long-neglected closet is now opened—the family altar is reared—the prayer-meeting is visited, and the tongue is loosed in earnest plead-

ing with sinners to become reconciled to God. Thus the leaven of divine influence is spread from one member to another, till the face of the church is entirely changed. The voice of confession, tears of repentance, songs of deliverance, fervent supplications, and faithful warnings, now take the place of that formality or death-like apathy that reigned before the Spirit was poured out from on high. Let the revival be protracted, and all who have the grace of God in any measure, will be awakened from their spiritual slumbers, and brought out on the Lord's side. Christians might as well sleep in heaven as sleep in a perpetual revival. Large bodies are a long time getting in motion; much time is needed to infuse life and animation into all the members of the body of Christ.

When the Spring opens, the snow that covers the plains and fields exposed to the sun, soon disappears; but that which is deposited by the fences and in the forests, remains for a long season. So in a revival. Some come at once directly under the influence of the Word and Spirit, and quickly feel their renewing power; others keep aloof for a time, but if the revival continues, they, at length, are warmed and melted down by the fires of Divine love. In this way Christ purgeth every branch that is in him, that it may bring forth more fruit.

To *another* class in the church a protracted revival is useful; I mean such as have a name to live, but are dead. Hypocrites and deceived persons cannot bear the test of a genuine revival. For a time they can look on with indifference, and feel safe, saying, "It is nothing but a temporary excitement." But let the work continue many months; let it spread from house to house, till they see their neighbors and friends, and perhaps the members of their own families, seeking the salvation of their souls, and how do they feel? Sensible of their deadness to every thing of a spiritual nature, they are constrained to look upon themselves, while they know they are viewed by others, as "an island of ice in a sea of fire." They are like the snows on the Alps that are never removed. Some such persons are brought to realize their state in revivals of short continuance. Would they not all be exposed—exposed to themselves, and exposed to others, in a perpetual revival? Would it be possible for a hypocrite to live in the church? And is it not desirable that such persons should be brought to a sense of their real condition—that their character should stand out as it is? In this way they may be led to feel their want, and seek the Lord while he may be found. By sifting out hypocrites in this way, their deadly influence, in shutting up the kingdom of heaven against others, will be destroyed. They will no longer be regarded as christians, but as hypocrites, having merely the name and form of godliness.

I see not how any christian can pass through a protracted revival —witness its progress, and breathe its atmosphere, and not be roused up to prayer and effort. That professor who cannot come to a prayer-meeting, or an evening meeting—who cannot take sweet counsel

with his brethren, and rejoice with the young convert—who cannot pour out his soul in prayer, and stretch forth a helping hand to save lost men, let not that professor regard himself as a christian. He separates himself from God, and sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face; and I hear the voice of the Lord declare concerning him:—"I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. xiv. 8.) If we wish to have a church freed of its hypocrites, and filled with devoted members, we should desire a perpetual revival.

The good of the impenitent certainly calls for such a state of the church. How much they are restrained and held in check by a revival. Their sinful pleasures and habits of open vice are interrupted, if not forever abandoned. Sometimes I am aware they are frantic with rage, and are mad upon their idols; but this is usually a desperate effort that soon ceases. Go with me into a community where God is pouring out his Spirit, and his church is abounding in his service. What Sabbath-day stillness and solemnity characterize the people. The idle jest and profane oath you seldom hear. The ball-room and card-table are forsaken. The intoxicating cup is used only by such as wish to drown the convictions of conscience. Almost all seem to be thinking about their souls, and preparing for the world to come. The iniquities of former times are exposed; deeds that were performed in the dead of night are now brought to light; and that which was spoken in the ear seems to be proclaimed upon the house-top. This revelation strikes terror through the ranks of transgressors. They see the hand of God; and those who do not submit to him, stand in awe, and tremble in his presence. And though the revival soon declines, its restraining power is seen and felt for years. That community which is most frequently blessed with revivals, is most distinguished for its good order and heathful morality. What then would be its condition in a perpetual revival? Let the heart of a church be ever full of love to God and love to men—that love which would rebuke iniquity, and point forward to death and a judgment to come; sinners would be comparatively silent and harmless. The chain of holiness would be laid upon Satan, and his works, if not destroyed, would be acted out on a small scale.

But good morals are not all we wish to secure. The impenitent have souls of untold worth. If not washed in the blood of Jesus, they must perish. To their ranks some are daily added; and from them some are daily summoned away to the retributions of eternity. The work of death goes steadily on. It is not occasional and temporary, and why should revivals be. O for that strong and steady influence from above, which shall secure the second birth of all who touch on these shores of probation!

The wants of the world render it desirable that there should be a perpetual revival in the church. Christ hath left the church a very

important trust, with reference to the world. His command is that she take the gospel and evangelize the nations. Eighteen centuries have rolled away and the work is not done; at the present time it moves onward slowly, and with great difficulty; and why? Is it for the want of numbers? No. She has sons and daughters enough to preach the gospel to every creature. Is it for the want of means? No. She has means sufficient—I had almost said without the practice of any self-denial, to furnish every nation, tribe, and family with the preached gospel. But the church has but little faith in God, and little love for souls; and therefore the work lingers. When in a state of declension, christians have but little desire to glorify God and save men. They are selfish and groveling, and have no heart to this appropriate work. But when filled with the spirit of a genuine revival, they have jealousy for God and sympathy for men. Then they can feel and pray and act. They wish to save souls whether near or remote. For this they are willing to employ all the talents they possess.

Suppose the whole Protestant Church now in a revival state; do you think there would be any want of means to carry forward our Missionary enterprises at home and abroad? The treasury of the Lord would be filled at once to overflowing. Suppose this revival should be perpetuated; how long do you think it would be before it would be sung in every dark corner of the earth,—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion—thy God reigneth." With such a church praying and laboring, the Lord would make a short work in the earth—a nation would be born at once, and Jesus would see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Nothing but the spirit of a perpetual revival is adequate to meet the wants of the world—to meet the calls of divine Providence. How desirable then that the church should speedily come into this state of holy consecration. And where shall the example first be set? Where may it be reasonably expected, if not in that section of the church that has been most highly favored by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. In New England, revivals of religion have been so frequent and powerful as to awaken joyful surprise throughout all Protestant Christendom.

And now it should be our aim, not merely to enjoy revivals—nor to enjoy them frequently, but to live on from year to year in a perpetual revival. Let us live so as not to be surprised if we witness conversions every week. Let us live so near to God—be so filled with faith and hope that we shall be greatly disappointed if souls are not continually coming into the kingdom of the Redeemer. Let one church occupy this high ground, and she will stand as a city on a hill, which cannot be hid. Other churches will see her light and rejoice in it. The idea of a perpetual revival will be entertained and acted upon. Then the churches, instead of sitting in sack-cloth, and mourning over their darkness and leanness the most of the time, as

they now do, will arise and put on their beautiful garments—they will shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.

II. Having considered the desirableness of a perpetual revival, the inquiry naturally arises, in the SECOND place, *Is God* WILLING *to grant this blessing to his people?* If it will not be for his glory, or the highest good of his church; or, if for any other reason God is unwilling to pour out his Spirit continually upon his people, then we should not labor and pray for this blessing with any expectation of receiving it.

But what say the Scriptures on this subject? The text contains an encouraging assurance,—"The Lord is with you *while ye be with him:* if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." The presence of God which is here promised, secures all that we mean by a perpetual revival of religion. As it secured to King Asa the victory over the Ethiopians, so it will now give to christians the victory over their enemies, and success in all their labors. It is the Divine presence that makes a genuine revival, and this, according to the text, may be enjoyed as long as we wish. Of the same import are many other portions of the revealed will of God. "He that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Again, speaking of his people whom he hath consecrated as a temple for himself, God says—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

These, and similar passages which abound in this holy book, express not only a willingness on the part of God to be with his people, but the most unequivocal promises and assurances that he will do so. Christ promised that he and his Father would take up their abode with his disciples; and, again, that the Holy Spirit should abide with them forever. A realization of these precious truths is all that we mean by a perpetual revival. Let us then engrave it upon our hearts as a truth never to be effaced or forgotten, that God is willing to bestow upon us the richest blessings we can seek,—nay more, that he is *willing to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask, or even think.*

And while He is willing, there is nothing in his nature or condition to prevent the accomplishment of his pleasure. There is no necessity for God's leaving his people when he is visiting them by his Spirit. He does not become weary, nor do his resources fail. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth

power to the faint; and to them who have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. Giving doth not impoverish him; nor doth withholding enrich him. The waters of salvation do not come from a broken cistern, but from an overflowing fountain that never fails, nor is ever diminished.

It is not necessary for God to leave a people that he visits in order to grant others a refreshing from his presence. Were it so—were it impossible for God to manifest the tokens of his presence to more than one community at the same time, then we could not hope for a perpetual revival. All his children are dear to him as the apple of his eye, and we should expect that our Heavenly Father would be passing around from one loved church to another—leaving some to mourn the hidings of his face, while others are rejoicing in his smiles. But the Lord is not thus shut up to space like one of us. He can be with every church, and every member, and every minister. Hear his glorious promises,—"Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool." "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." A kindred promise is made to all his disciples,—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." His promise too respecting revivals of religion, seems to respect not local churches, but the whole family of man,—"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." God's Spirit is a *free* Spirit, and it may be freely given to the world. It will extend its saving operations till, like the atmosphere, it will cover the whole earth, imparting life and salvation to all the inhabitants thereof.

The good of God's people does not render it necessary that He should withdraw his reviving Spirit from them. There are two *heretical* impressions extensively prevailing in the church:—one is, that a high degree of piety cannot consist with a proper attention to worldly business;—the other, that eminently holy persons cannot live long here on earth. But is it so? Cannot christians enjoy the presence of God, and prosecute their worldly avocations? Then the Christian religion is not adapted to man in his circumstances here below. Who will thus arraign the wisdom of God in the plan of salvation, and charge him with a grand failure? God hath declared, (Deut. xii. 7.) that his people *may rejoice before him in all that they put their hands unto.* On this passage the excellent John Rogers remarks,—"Surely this is a great liberty, but I fear enjoyed by very few. Doubtless many of our sorrows come through our own default, which we might avoid. And as for godly sorrow, that would be consistent with this rejoicing; if, therefore, we are allowed in all things to rejoice, then may we do so from one thing to another; from our waking to our sleeping. First, in our first thoughts of God in

the morning; then in our prayer; after that in our calling, and while we are about our daily business; then at our meals; and in company, and alone; both at home and abroad; in prosperity and adversity; in meditation; in our dealings; and in all our affairs; and lastly, in closing the day in examination, and viewing it over. And what hinders, if we are resolved to do the will of God, throughout the day, but that we may indeed *rejoice* before him in all that we put our hand unto?" And have there not been some that have carried this spirit of piety into all the duties of life? Did not Enoch and David and Daniel; Hannah and Lois and Eunice; Leighton and Harlan Page, live and act on this principle of serving the Lord in all things? Let us dismiss, then, forever the thought that religion cannot be carried into the common walks of life. Let us embrace it as a principle, and reduce it to practice in all things, so that *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God.*

Christians are not better fitted for the duties of life by grieving away the Holy Spirit. In so doing they wrong their own souls,—they injure all their interests; for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." God does not withdraw from his people *while they be with him.* He has no good to confer by his absence. In the language of Dr. Owen:—"There may be a season, indeed, when God will seem to hide himself from believers in their prayers, so as they shall neither find that life in themselves which they have done formerly, nor be sensible of any gracious communications from him; but this is done only for a time, and principally to stir them up to such fervency and perseverance in prayer, as may recover them into their former, or a better estate than yet they have attained to. The like may be said of all other duties of religion, or ordinances of divine worship."

As for the sentiment that eminent holiness cannot remain long on the earth, I know not whence it sprang. Sure I am it is not authorized in the Word of God. Men are prone to observe a few particular cases, and from these, hastily draw general conclusions. How many mistakes have been made in this way, both in philosophy and religion. In this way, perhaps, originated the sentiment we are considering. Some few young men, distinguished for piety, have been mysteriously cut down in the morning of their usefulness. Brainard and Martyn, and James Brainard Taylor were early removed; and from this, the sentiment may have arisen, that uncommon piety must soon leave the world. How erroneous the inference! It has no foundation in reason or Scripture; nor is it well sustained by observation. Must we be groveling, worldly, and sinful, in a considerable degree, in order to prolong life here below? What is there so conservative in sin that it must be cherished in order to keep soul and body together? The Bible teaches us that weakness, sickness, pain, and death, are the fruit of sin. From this we should infer that piety,

which brings us to obey the laws of our being, as well as those of revelation, would serve to improve our systems and prolong our days on the earth.

Cannot eminent piety live here? What says the history of the church on this subject? Did not Abraham and Job and Paul and Hooker and Davenport live to a good old age, and, for many years, bring forth the ripest fruits of piety? Their religion did not kill them. Christians must walk with God, and that too more closely than the church is now accustomed to do, or a perpetual revival can never be enjoyed. But this thought is worthy of more particular consideration. The conclusion from this branch of the subject is this—God is willing to abide with his people by his reviving Spirit, and there is nothing in his nature or condition, or in the circumstances of his people to render it necessary that he should leave them.

III. But there are some conditions which we must notice, in the third place, on which a perpetual revival may be enjoyed. These are referred to in the text—"The Lord is with you *while ye be with him.*" Christians are *with God* in a season of revival, and they must continue with him if they would have such a season perpetuated.

They must be with him in *communion*. Those christians whom the Lord employs as the instruments of promoting his work of grace have fellowship with him. They have fellow feelings and fellow principles with God. They come to his mercy seat and lay hold of his omnipotent arm. In the closet, at the communion table, and in all the services of religion they have true enjoyment. This arises, not from animal excitement, which, like the flood-stream, will soon be lost, but from a hearty agreement with God about the principles of sin and holiness. No one can live in the indulgence of sin and be useful in a revival. Secret as well as open transgression creates an insuperable obstacle to communion with God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says David, "the Lord will not hear me." There is no such thing as praying and sinning together. And if one attempts to call upon God while in a course of sinful indulgence, he mocks God, and will be treated as a mocker. God will not be gracious to him; He will not incline his ear to his cry; He will not lift upon him the light of his countenance, but leave his soul in horrible darkness. "What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" To walk in darkness, i. e. in the ways of sin, renders communion with God impossible, for "if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." When laboring successfully in the work of the Lord, christians walk in the light, i. e. in the paths of truth and holy living, and in this way have true fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

A perpetual revival depends on this continued communion with God. His people must not rest satisfied with such tokens of his favor as they have received; but strive to *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They should not content

themselves with occasional glimpses of their Father's face in the closet, and at the sacramental feast; but seek a renewed sense of his love day by day. "Many of the better sort of professors are too negligent in this matter;" says Dr. Owen; "they do not long and pant in the inward man after renewed pledges of the love of God; they do not consider how much they have need of them, that they may be encouraged and strengthened to all other duties of obedience; they do not prepare their minds for the reception of them, nor come (to his worship) with *expectation* of their communication to them; they do not rightly fix their faith on this truth, namely, that these holy administrations and duties are appointed of God, in the first place, as the means of conveying his love and a sense of it to our souls. From hence spring the luke-warmness, coldness and indifference in and to the duties of holy worship; for if men have the *principal design* of faith in them, and disesteem the *chiefest benefit* to be obtained by them, whence should zeal for them, delight in them, or diligence in attendance to them arise? Let not any please themselves under the power of such decays; they are indications of their inward frame, and those infallible. Such persons will grow *cold and negligent*, as to the duties of public worship; they will put themselves neither to charge or trouble about them; every occasion of life diverts them, and when they do attend upon them, it is with great indifference. These things openly discover an ulcerous disease in the very souls of men, and I would avoid the society of such persons as those who carry an infectious disease about them, unless it were to help on their cure." (Spir. Mind. 169.)

In these remarks we have a graphic picture of the decline of christians—of the manner in which the Spirit is grieved from the church and revivals are stopped. Here let christians be on their guard. Let them not forsake God, or seek only at long intervals to come near to him. They should not live a day without going to heaven many times, and in all that they do, they should set the Lord before their faces. By so doing the light of God will be their light. They will be in sympathy with him: the feelings and principles of the divine mind will be theirs. And as He is ever active in pouring forth the flood of his benevolence throughout his boundless kingdom; so christians, partaking of his spirit, would do good to all as they have opportunity. They would comfort, warn, rebuke and encourage each other, and pray one for another. To sinners they would often speak about the soul, and the blood of its redemption. And more than all their example, like the voice of many waters, would make a dreadful sound in the ears of the ungodly. Disciples of Jesus, do you doubt about the result of such a course? Do you not perceive how a perpetual revival may be enjoyed? All that is needful is—*to be with God*, to live like christians. How simple the rule! Will you not strive to walk by it.

If this is so, how great the responsibility of christians! If a perpetual revival is not enjoyed, they are chargeable with the crime of

forsaking God, and rendering his instrumentality for the salvation of men, ineffectual. He is the same. The Sabbath, the preached word, and the Spirit are the same; and why should not the church labor for, and expect the same blessed fruits of conviction, conversion and sanctification from week to week, and year to year? Why not be "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labors are not in vain in the Lord?" Why not enjoy a perpetual revival? God is willing to grant it: and can we live without it and not incur great guilt and provoke heavy judgments?

Ministers of the gospel, I am aware, come in for a great share of responsibility in this matter. There is meaning in the proverb—like priest, like people. If we stand aloof from revivals—view them with suspicion, or pronounce them spurious; if we dictate to the Lord, and stand against reviving influences unless they come in the way that we prescribe; above all, if we live at a distance from God ourselves, and have not the light of life in our souls, we and our people will greatly suffer. He may visit other churches and multiply converts to righteousness, but we shall be like *the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh.* We must be filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, if we would make full proof our ministry. Without these qualifications we shall run uncertainly, and fight as one that beateth the air. Said Brainard on his death-bed, "When ministers feel these special gracious influences on their hearts, it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of men, and as it were handle them with their hands; whereas, without them, whatever reason and oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps instead of hands."

How often have ministers realized the truth of these remarks in their own experience. How often they preach without getting hold of their hearers, and holding them close to the truth. But when they feel aright,—when they go into the pulpit in the *strength of the Lord God*, they generally preach in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. The eye of the hearer is fixed—his ear attent, and his heart is moved. God sets the seal to his truth, and makes it his wisdom and power to salvation.

Ministers, as well as churches, should *aim* at great things, and *expect* great things. If they do not expect revivals only at great intervals, they will not labor to secure them;—they will not enjoy them. But let them believe that a perpetual revival is possible, then, if they have the right spirit, they will aim to secure it. Let them also enjoy the hearty co-operation of praying, believing churches, then the word will run, have free course, and be glorified. O, come the day when *holiness unto the Lord* shall be upon the bells of the horses, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar! May not that day be near? Let us see. Let us bring all the tithes into the store-house, and prove the Lord therewith, and see if He will not pour us out a blessing, so that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

SERMON CCCLIV.

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THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that"——"A KING shall reign and prosper,"——"and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; and xxxiii. 16.

THE Bible represents OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST in many and different points of light. As a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, the Son of God appears, in the Sacred volume. The various views of his character, office and work, traced by the pen of inspiration, constitute *one harmonious and perfect whole*. There is nothing conflicting in all the glorious assemblage of excellencies, that unite in the character of the Redeemer of the world. Nothing can be added to it. Nothing can be taken from it. It stands, and will forever stand, ALONE,—a model of spotless perfection.

I propose to exhibit one of these views, as it appears extending through the Sacred volume, from Moses to Malachi, and from Matthew to the end. All parts of the book seem to combine to set forth, in the strongest relief, one peculiarity in his character, indicated in the title, THE KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In order to accomplish the object I have in view, I shall confine myself closely to the Scripture testimony; and to this single element in the regal glories of our Redeemer;—and invite attention, *first*, to those considerations and statements which bear upon the subject, in Moses and the Prophets.

WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

This term, as applied to God, signifies that perfection of his nature and attributes, by which he is infinitely just and holy in himself, and in his dealings with all his creatures. *Righteousness*, as applied to

man, signifies his conformity to this attribute in the Divine character, manifested by obedience to the Divine law. This is in accordance with the definition of righteousness as given by Moses. At the second giving of the law, narrated in Deut. vi., before the children of Israel were permitted to enter into the promised land, Moses was directed to assemble all the tribes in the peaceful valley of Beth-Peor, and to rehearse to them again, in the seclusion and stillness of that scene, the same sublime commands that had been promulgated forty years before, amid the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai. After the repetition of the Decalogue on this occasion, the honored herald of Jehovah declares:—

"*And it shall be* OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, *if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He commanded us.*"

Thus it plainly appears that *Righteousness* in man, implies the keeping of *all God's commands.* This is its primary Scripture signification. But all mankind have failed in the requirement, and are consequently utterly destitute of righteousness.

THE DESTITUTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AMONG MEN ABSOLUTE AND UNIVERSAL.

The two-fold law of love to God, and love to man, on which all the divine commands depend, the whole human race have violated. There is no nation nor kingdom, under the whole heaven, where such principles and obligations are recognised in human codes. *The very first and chief of all the commandments*, and which, in the spirit of it, embraces every duty that man owes to his Maker, every human being has broken. Not a single individual of all the race of Adam, (with one exception,) has ever obeyed it. Not a man, not a woman, not a child, (who has reached the period of moral action at all,) of all the generations, during 4800 years, has been exempt from the universal charge of transgression.

The second command, to "love thy neighbor as thyself," embracing in its spirit all the duties which human beings owe to each other, has been likewise and equally disobeyed. The world have trampled them both under foot. They have rejected the commands of Almighty God, and laid them in the dust.

The *first thing* which the ancient lawgiver did, as he brought down from Horeb's top, the stone tablets which God had given him there, for man, was to dash them in pieces—at his feet;—an expressive but melancholy type of what Moses and all mankind have done. They have said, "We will not have the Almighty to reign over us."—"The tables of the testimony," "the tables of stone written with the finger of God;"—"the tables which were the work of God; the writing, which was the writing of God," they have dashed in pieces! And this is the testimony of God's word, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are al-

together become filthy. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. There is none *righteous*, no, not one."

The history of the world accords with this testimony of the word of God. Let us trace, for a moment, the progress of mankind after this second giving of the law, to which we have alluded. We need not dwell upon any other portion of the human family, than the children of Israel. The rest of the Gentile world, it will be conceded, were sunk in the lowest depths of idolatry and sin.

The children of Israel had not taken possession of the promised land, before they had far gone in the career of transgression. Moses, the servant of God, was required to say unto them: "Hear, O Israel, thou art to go over Jordan, this day." * * * "Understand, therefore, this day, * * * Speak not in thy heart, saying, for *my righteousness*, the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land. * * * Not for *thy righteousness*, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess the land; but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out before thee." Moses repeats and reiterates the declaration, "Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for *thy righteousness*. For, remember, forget not, from the day thou didst depart out of Egypt, until ye came into this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord."

These passages establish the fact, that at this period, neither the Jew, nor the Canaanite, had any righteousness in the sight of God. All the Canaanitish nations were about to be blotted out from the face of the earth, to be, in their ruin, an everlasting monument of God's displeasure against sin; and the Jews, who were to take their place, were distinctly informed, it was for *no righteousness of theirs*, that they were to inherit the mountains and valleys of the exterminated nations.

Time will not permit, to follow the course of the Israelites down through succeeding ages. Suffice it to say, their whole career, until the final overthrow and ruin of their city and nation, was little else than a long protracted succession of alternate sins and punishments. They were ever reaping the bitter fruits of their *unrighteousness*.

The King of Righteousness.

There was *no righteousness* among men. The prophets early began to announce ANOTHER RIGHTEOUSNESS. It would almost seem as if the forbearance of heaven had been exhausted with the trial of mankind. Once, the whole race, a single family excepted, had been swept away with a flood. Now, the entire family of nations, in the land of Canaan, were extirpated, and the children of Israel, the fewest and feeblest of all people, were brought in to take their place, and make one trial more, if a nation would obey their mighty Maker and Deliverer. But all in vain. The ante-diluvians, the post-diluvians, the very family of Noah, and all his descendants, the Canaanite, the Egyptian,

and the Jew, all, all alike disobey their Creator, and violate his law, whether written on the tablet of the conscience and the heart, or on the stone tables of Moses.

It would seem, that in view of this universal destitution of righteousness among men,. that the prophets began to proclaim *another righteousness of God.* David said that *righteousness* should "look down from heaven." "That the righteousness of God was an everlasting righteousness." He declared that there should "Come forth a branch out of the root of Jesse, and the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, and righteousness should be the girdle of his loins." Isaiah, as an herald, proclaims a coming King—saying, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness." "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake. He will magnify *the law*, and make it honorable."

As the prophet seems to obtain fuller views of the righteousness which was to come from heaven, he says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, let the skies pour down righteousness;"—and his emotions kindling in prospect of a coming ransom for sinners, he exclaims, "Surely shall men say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." Again, he says, "The righteousness of the servants of the Lord is from Him. For He, who came when there was no intercessor, put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head." When in vision, he foresees the coming King of Righteousness, as a conqueror, rejoicing in the apparel of victory over his enemies, he asks, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah—this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" and the response is, "*I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*"

An hundred years after this, Jeremiah repeats the prophecy, saying, "The days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David, a righteous *branch*, and a King shall reign and prosper, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Ten years later, the same prophet renews the promise of Jehovah, saying, in nearly the same words, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised, I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow, * * * and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

About fifty years later, a still more wonderful annunciation of this great truth was made. In a far distant land, many hundred miles from the scene of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, a revelation was made unto Daniel, under circumstances of interest and sublimity, not surpassed by any that had preceded it. The Jewish captive, in the court of the King of Babylon, was singled out as an object of the most extraordinary interposition of heaven, and of one of the most interesting missions to our world that is on record, in all the history of the ministry of angels. Daniel was humbling himself in

prayer and fasting, in sack-cloth and ashes, confessing to God, with unfeigned self-abasement and sorrow, his own sins, and those of all his people, deploring their utter destitution of righteousness in his sight. While he was speaking, and praying, and confessing, the archangel Gabriel was sent quickly from the court of heaven, on his errand of tender consolation to this mourning captive. He announces still more distinctly the advent of the Messiah, and more emphatically declares this great object of his mission.

Gabriel says to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS: that is, the Most Holy, the Messiah, should come; He would make reconciliation for iniquity, and not only for the iniquity of Judah, but of all mankind. He would *bring in* to this dark world of sin, an *everlasting righteousness*, a righteousness sufficient for the justification of every sinner to the end of time.

Finally, as the canon of the Old Testament closes, and the spirit of Prophecy departs from the Jewish church and nation, Malachi, about four hundred and fifty years previous to the coming of the Messiah, in anticipation of his advent, and of the brightness of his spotless character, proclaimed, as the last strain of prophetic inspiration, that the day of the Lord was at hand, when the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS should arise with healing on his wings.

In the fulness of time, in accordance with the prophecies, the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS did rise upon our world. The Messiah came, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in *everlasting righteousness*. The holy child Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and the angel declared to the mother of our Lord, that he would save his people from their sins.

II. Let us in the second place, consider this view of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is exhibited in the Gospel. It is truly remarkable how clearly and distinctly the Savior himself declares this great object of his coming. Scarcely had he commenced his first public discourse on the mount when with great emphasis, he says, Think not I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, *but to fulfil*. For, verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till *all be fulfilled*.

And *he did fulfil the law*. The Lord from heaven in mysterious union with the son of Mary, fulfilled every jot and tittle of the eternal law. It would be interesting and important to dwell on the *perfect fulfilment of law*, which characterized the life of our Redeemer. Not a single act of violation of law ever escaped him. He discharged in immaculate perfection every obligation under which a human being can lie, in the relations of life which he sustained, and that, too, in circumstances of difficulty, temptation, danger and suffering, such as no other individual was ever called to meet.

If you ask, *how did he fulfil the moral law*, embodied in the two commands, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself! How was his love to the Father manifested? and his love to man?

I answer, his love to the Father was manifested by his perfect obedience to the Father's will. The whole tenor of his life was in accordance with the frequent prayer, "Father not my will, but thine be done." "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

His spirit was so stirred within him, when he witnessed the profanation of his Father's temple, that his disciples applied to him the prophecy. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. And he said himself, near the close of his life, "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." And just on the eve of his death, he added, almost as his dying testimony, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

How did he fulfil the law of love to man? you ask. His whole life, and his agonizing death, were in fulfilment of this law. For it is written greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But Christ manifested his love for man in laying down his life for enemies.

How did he fulfil the ceremonial law? In the rites of circumcision and baptism were recognised his exact conformity to the Mosiac ritual and Jewish custom. Joseph and Mary took him to the temple, to do for him, after the custom of the law. And not until all things were performed, according to the law of the Lord, did the infant Savior and his earthly kindred return to their own city Nazareth.

Jesus journeyed from Gallilee to Jordan, to be baptized of John. But the greatest of the prophets remonstrated, saying, "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus answered, suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil *all righteousness.*

On one occasion, when the collectors of tribute for the Temple service came to his disciples and asked, if "their Master paid tribute?" Jesus said, "of whom do the *kings of the earth* take tribute, of their own children, or of strangers?" as if he had said, "Doth my Father, KING OF HEAVEN, take tribute, for the service of his Temple, of me, his only son? The children of a king are free," said the Savior. Nevertheless in fulfilment of every duty which law required of a Jew, he directs Peter to go for the fish, who would bring in his mouth, the tribute silver, both for the Lord and the apostle.

And all the requisitions of the temple service, and the appointed attendance at the feast of the passover, we notice are faithfully observed in the life of our Redeemer.

Even in all the duties of *civil law*, we find a full and perfect discharge of every obligation. *Tribute to Cæsar he did not refuse to pay.*

But perhaps you say, He was not subject to the temptations that we are, and that in his exalted nature, he was able to obey.

Yet it is written, that he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him our nature, the seed of Abraham, and became *man*, uniting in himself, *the Lord from heaven in mysterious union with the son of Mary.* "God manifest in the flesh." "*The Lord from heaven*, in union with a human body and a human soul; the man Christ Jesus tempted in all points, like as we are, and yet without sin.

And he was tempted as we are. Read the story of his temptation and see. Was he not tempted by the offer of *all earthly good*, if he would worship and serve Satan rather than God? Is not this the same kind of temptation, for which thousands plunge into sin, and make shipwreck of all hope of heaven. Analyze the subject of your Redeemer's temptations, and see if they do not accord with the temptations to sin, which have always been the lure and the ruin of our race. Jesus alone has resisted them, and conquered Satan, and fulfilled God's eternal law.

Or, if we consider the course of his life, as marked by the performance of all duties towards God and man, how striking and wonderful it appears. With what assiduity must he have studied the prophets and the law! The wondering people, in view of his attainments, exclaim, how knoweth this man letters, having never learned? With what just and pungent reproof, he tells the people, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." How perfect his acquaintance with all the word of God! How apposite his quotations in every scene of life! and to the various subjects of his instructions! and how intimate his knowledge of all things that were written in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning himself! How wonderful the spirit of devotion that characterized his life. His was no more a life of sorrow, than it was of prayer!

How uniform and consistent his observance of the Sabbath day, in an era and among a generation of the deepest darkness as to its spiritual meaning. How constant and unwearied his attentions to the sick, the dying, and the mourners. How perfect his fulfilment of the law of love, even under the greatest provocation that insult and injury can give.

In his own country, when he taught the neighbors of Joseph and Mary in the Synagogue, so that they were astonished at his doctrine, they derided him as only the carpenter's son.

Some esteemed him as the friend of publicans and sinners, because he mingled with the common people, eating and drinking with them, at their own tables. Some called him a glutton and a wine bibber, because as a prophet, he conformed in meat and drink to the customs of the people, and did not practice the abstemiousness and austerity of prophets, who roamed in the wilderness, clad in the coarse apparel of camel's hair, and living on the locusts and wild honey of the desert.

He was often derided and was laughed to scorn. They called him a Sabbath breaker and a blasphemer, and a despiser of the law. They charged him as a madman, with being possessed with the devil. They called him Belzebub himself, the very chief and prince of devils.

Yes, they declared the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, the most holy, the blessed and glorious One, to be no other than Satan, the prince of devils, the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning, the worst and most hateful of all the creatures of God.

Here is personal abuse, to which the records of injustice and calumny among men, can show no parallel. But his only reply was, "I have not a devil; ye do dishonor me."

How many personal indignities did he receive? They mocked him, they provoked him, they laid in wait to catch him in his words. Spies watched, feigning specious pretences to entangle him in his speech. His disciples, even, who had solemnly declared, that should they die with him, yet would they not deny him, yet all forsook him and fled. One denied cursing and blaspheming, and another betrayed him to his murderers with a kiss!

The crucifiers hurry him to the High Priests. The men around mock and buffet him. They blindfold and smite him in the face. They deride and blaspheme him.

At early dawn, they urge him to the council, and lay grievous but groundless accusations against him. The drag him to Pilate and to Herod, and repeat and multiply the tokens of their derison, scorn and hate. They set him at nought, and deck his brow with a piercing crown, and array him in a gorgeous robe, and place a sceptre in his hand, in mockery of his royalty.

But this was not enough. It was not enough that they hunted him as a thief, with weapons and torches:—not enough, that they suborned witnesses with false accusations of blasphemy:—not enough, that they buffetted him and smote him with the palms of their hands, and spit in his face, and that at the very tribunal of justice and of law, in utter defiance of every principle of both.

No. Malignity was not satisfied with the blood, which the strokes of the scourge might draw. To Calvary, to Calvary he must go! Crucify him, crucify him, is the cry. With thieves he must suffer, and with thieves expire. His must be the ignominious and agonizing death, which rebels, robbers and assassins only were condemned to die! And yet he was *guiltless*. He had violated no law, human or divine. Pilate, the recreant arbiter of justice and of law, washed his hands and said, "I find no fault in him;" and yet delivers him over to death.

One of the dying thieves said to the others, "We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss."

The Roman Centurion, who conducted the execution, and his band, who watched the last moments of the sufferer, and heard his dying words, felt the trembling of the earthquake, and saw the darkness over all the land, and knew of the rending of the temple vail, and the solemn pause throughout all nature,—they even exclaimed, "certainly this was a righteous man: truly this was the Son of God."

Judas the betrayer, went out and hanged himself, leaving his dying testimony, "I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Such is the evidence of the innocency, the spotlessness, the righteousness of our crucified Lord. Is there a command in all the Book of God for man to obey, that does not find an example and fulfilment in the life and obedience of our KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

I shall now proceed to consider the use, which the Apostles made of this great and glorious doctrine.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles, addressing the Church at Philippi, says of himself, "If any man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:"—that is, "he had more reason to trust in self-righteousness, than any other man;" and yet he adds, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith." Such are the apostle's views in respect to his personal interest in the righteousness of Christ. In his very first epistle, to the pagan church in Galatia, he says with great emphasis, "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we, in Hebrews, have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified."

In the Epistle to the Romans, his first great object is to prove—"that by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, but by the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ."

Paul says, he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for therein the righteousness of God is revealed. He says, also, that by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and as by the offence of one, to wit, the disobedience of Adam, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, that is the obedience and righteousness of Christ, the free gift came apon all men, unto justification of life.

He speaks of those who, ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own, and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of Christ; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

His Epistles to the Corinthians, to Titus, to the Hebrews, and indeed all his writings abound with contrast and antithesis, and almost every form of figure and of speech, to illustrate and enforce the great doctrine of justification, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by faith in the righteousness of Christ. How the rags of human righteousness appear, and how gloriously the robes of our Redeemer shine, in the mirror which the apostle holds up!

But last of all, this great apostle, when near the close of his life, as he looks back upon the race he had run, and forward to the scenes before him, in the future world, exclaims—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give

me in that day." Then, the crown at which Paul aimed, was the crown of the Redeemer's righteousness. Much is said in the Bible of the crown of life! The apostles loved to dwell upon it. But the Christian believer too often, alas, reads of that crown with a vague and indefinite conception of its nature and meaning. They conceive it to be a figurative expression, meaning almost anything that is bright and glorious in heaven. But Paul gives it a clear, definite and distinct signification. We need not doubt what it is. Paul says to the Corinthians, "that they ran in the Christian race, not to gain a corruptible, but an incorruptible crown." James speaks of the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Peter says, "when the chief shepherd shall appear, the faithful shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." John, in the vision of the apocalypse, delivers the message from the Son of Man to the church of Ephesus, saying to its members, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!—the crown of righteousness, of glory, and of life, which the Lord, the righteous judge, gives to his penitent and believing children." There are also other beautiful scripture figures, which seem to illustrate this same truth.

Isaiah describes the Messiah as going forth on his redeeming mission among men, with "righteousness as the girdle of his loins," and calls the trophies of his work, which adorn the hill of Zion, the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. He represents the ransomed church, in their exulting praise, as saying of their Lord, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." And John, in one of the glorious visions of the apocalypse, beholds the church at the marriage of the Lamb, arrayed in fine linen, the *righteousness of the saints.*

Remarks.—1. We see in this Scripture delineation, one of those striking and wonderful points of view, in which the Bible represents the character of our Redeemer. Unlike every other being that has appeared among our race, He stands forth *solitary* and *alone*, distinguished from all the rest of mankind, as the fulfiller of God's eternal law. Let your imaginations roam along the track of ages, from Adam's day to the flood, from the flood to the coming of Christ, from his death to our time, and from the present down to the end of the world; and among all the countless myriads of all generations, Jesus Christ is represented as the only one who ever has kept, or ever will keep the holy law of heaven!

The fairest and brightest specimens of human character that adorn the pages of history, stand at an immeasurable distance below him. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints, of all ages, with all the undistinguishable multitude of sinners of every degree, *stand together*, the wretched, guilty, condemned violators of the eternal law of heaven. Christ Jesus stands, and will forever stand *alone*, pure and holy, the sublime and glorious spectacle of one, and one only, amidst the countless throng of this ruined race of ours, who has kept God's law!

Truly, Jesus Christ is the spotless lamb. He is the bright and morning star. He is the sun of righteousness, rising still, and shedding his healing beams on this dark world of sin. He is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2. I have said nothing of Christ's *sufferings* and *death*, as the ground of our *pardon*. I have designedly spoken only of his RIGHTEOUSNESS, as the ground of *justification*. To set forth the scripture view of his character and passion, as the LAMB SLAIN from the foundation of the world, illustrated by types and observances, from the time of the first sinner's sacrifice, to the time of his own expiring cry, would require a discourse of itself, more extended than this. And none of my hearers will forget, in this contemplation of his character, that he also bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and he is also *the Lord, our ransom and our sacrifice.*

3. We see here the true scripture doctrine of *perfection*. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. If righteousness came by the law, then Christ were dead in vain. But now, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of Christ is counted unto them; for He is the righteous branch; He is the Lord their righteousness; and they are the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. It is *his perfection* and not ours, by which we must be saved. His spotless righteousness and perfect sacrifice, are the only grounds of salvation!

4. We see also the error of all the forms of false religion. Human ingenuity has devised a thousand expedients to make amends for sins. Mankind have resorted to sacrifice and penance, and innumerable acts of self-mortification, in the vain hope of expiating sin, and justifying themselves in the sight of God. But all such attempts are founded in erroneous and defective views of the Divine law,—of the nature of true obedience, and of the means of justification, which God has provided.

The law requires a *perfect* righteousness. The law demands that the whole life of man, from the cradle to the grave, should be spent in constant and unceasing exercise of supreme love to God and love to man. But all mankind have failed in this, and are utterly destitute of righteousness in the sight of God. Not a single individual of all the race of Adam, (Christ only excepted,) has ever obeyed the *first command*, embracing in its spirit every duty which man owes to his Maker. And the second like unto it, comprehending every duty which human beings owe to each other, has received no better obedience. The world have trampled them under foot. They have rejected the commands of their Almighty Maker, and laid them in the dust. They have said with Pharaoh, "Who is the Almighty that we should obey his voice?" The broken fragments of the tables of stone are scattered among all nations.

But when Christ came, he came, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And he did it. He obeyed the law. And it is by *his obedience*, "THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE, THAT MANY MUST BE MADE RIGHT-

nous." He has magnified the law and made it honorable. Christ h restored the broken tablets. The Lord is well pleased for his righ eousness sake.

My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy word,
But in thy life, the Law appears,
Drawn out in living characters.

And this shows us, finally, what a debt, what a weight of oblig tions, we are under to our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole world is i debted to him. The whole human race, from the first man that w made to the last that shall be born, are under unspeakable and eve lasting obligations to our Lord and Savior. And ten thousand tim ten thousand repudiate their debt.

I call upon you, my fellow-immortals, to consider what you ov to the Son of God. I call upon you, by all that he has done a suffered for you, to make him the due returns. I know full well th you owe him ten thousands of talents, and have nothing to pay. An therefore, I beseech you, to give him all that you can give, and a that is not his already, your gratitude, your love, your services, a your praise. Be thankful and love him, serve and praise him.

I call on every heart. Have you ever, in sincerity and truth, o fered your poor tribute of thanks and praise to him, who has obey the law for you, and for you borne your sins in his own body on t tree.

O, praise him, every heart and voice! Praise your Redeemer. L every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord.

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SERMON CCCLV.

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THE FUTURE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."—Isaiah ii. 2.

This poetic imagery delineates the final and universal prevalence of religion. Christianity is a temple majestic and conspicuous, and all the nations crowd its courts in united adoration. There are many interesting indications that this prophecy is soon to be fulfilled. This moral transformation is now in rapid and visible progress. I invite your attention to some of the most conspicuous of the evidences that this world is soon to be christianized.

I. *The political aspect of the globe indicates this approaching change.*—The councils of cabinets, the tramp of armies, the sweep and conflict of hostile navies, are all subservient to the designs of Deity. A few centuries ago, the name of Christ had never been heard by the uncounted millions who roamed over the prairies and through the forests of this vast continent. Then God raised up Columbus with his enquiring mind and adventurous spirit; and overruled the political ambition of the united courts of Castle and Aragon to supply him with ships for his voyage of discovery; and permitted the proud spirit of the English Church to drive our pilgrim fathers into exile, and sent the submissive tempest to blow them to the rock of Plymouth, where he had previously prepared for them a home by the ministry of the plague which had swept away the savage inhabitants. And now nearly every vestige of heathenism is obliterated from the

land, and it is almost certain that, in a few years, this whole new world, from the Arctic Circle to the cliffs of Patagonia, will be inhabited by a professedly christian people.

Turn your eyes to Africa. The navy of France sweeps across the Mediterranean, batters down the wall of Algiers, and takes possession of the country. Whatever may have been the political motive for this measure, the result which God educes is, that the institutions of Christendom supplant the delusions of the fasle prophet.

England and America establish their colonies along the western coast of Africa, from Mount Atlas, till her southern cape is doubled. Though political ambition or mercenary interest may be the inspiring motive, the result is that the naked savage disappears as the European and American take his place; the altars of heathenism vanish as the church spire rises, where the rude temple of idolatry once stood; barbarian chieftains, who have drenched the land in blood, are succeeded by intelligent governors, and constitutions are engrossed, and laws enacted, and courts of justice established, and colleges founded, and schools supported;—and where the miserable hut of the Hottentot or the Caffaree deformed the landscape, the embowered cottage of European or American taste, cheers the eye with its cultivated fields and ornamental garden.

England, to extend her commerce and strengthen her political power, sends her steam ships to ascend the Nile, and stage coaches cross the desert from Cairo to Suez, and the tribes listlessly lounging upon the shores of the Red Sea behold with amazement the majestic steamer rushing through their silent waters. Thus are the *political movements* of nations crowding into the *Continent of Africa* on every side, and with resistless power, the influences and the institutions of Christendom.

In Asia the same wonderful movement is apparent on a scale of still more astonishing grandeur. Not long ago the Turkish empire was the terror of Christendom. But now, with her janissaries slain, her fleet destroyed, her treasury exhausted, and her empire dismembered by the successful revolt of Egypt and of Greece, Turkey has sunk below contempt. The crescent which now glitters upon the minarets of Constantinople, like the waning moon it symbolizes, is a fitting emblem of Mohammed's departing power.

The Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus, and the Ganges, are but the great arteries, through which, by armies and by embassies, by diplomacy and by commerce, the enlightened nations are diffusing the science, the arts, and the civil institutions of Christendom through the Asiatic Continent. And the nameless nations who people her vast interior must receive, with these influences, that only religion which can exist with cultivated intellect and high civilization. Even China, with her three hundred millions of imprisoned subjects, has had her doors of exclusion battered down; and the time can not be far distant when that mysterious empire shall be open to the commerce and the travel of the Christian world. Thus are all the great politi-

cal movements of the nations of the earth tending to usher in the universal reign of Christianity.

II. *The progress of civilization and the arts indicate this approaching change.*—A few years ago it required the painful labor of years to copy the Bible, and the wealth of a prince to purchase one. Think of a Bible, such as our forefathers had, written by the slow process of the pen, upon the skins of goats, sewed together, making a roll two feet wide, and ninety feet long. Now, the art of printing scatters the word of God like autumn leaves, and it is found in the humblest dwelling.

Not many centuries have passed since none could read but the learned few. Noble lords, proud barons, powerful kings, and even bishops of the churches, could neither read nor write. Now, common schools have brought instruction to every man's door. Knowledge is becoming, like the sun light, every where diffused.

War has ever been one of the greatest obstacles in the way of human improvement. Now, apparently resistless causes are operating to end these scenes of blind demoniac rage.

1. There is, first, the rapid extension of piety, carrying with it the principles of peace, convincing of the iniquity of war, and influencing man to regard his fellow man as a brother.

2. And then, there is the extension of information, of enlightened views, of national policy, so that every cabinet in Christendom is satisfied that there is no calamity so disastrous to national wealth and power, as war.

3. Another influence of vast magnitude, is to be found in the rapid descent of power from a few rulers to the people. The time has gone by when the caprices of a king, or the ambition of a favorite courtier, can involve nations in fire and blood. The people who are to furnish the money, and sleep in the tented field, and to be mowed down like grass before the destructive engines of modern warfare, are to decide for themselves the question whether they will live in peace in their dwellings, or whether they will abandon their homes to bleed and to die on the field of carnage.

4. And there is another cause singular indeed in its character, but most influential in its operation. It is the invention of irresistible engines of destruction. The more terrible the instruments of war become, the more reluctant are the nations to expose property and life. Torpedoes, congreve rockets, Paixhan guns, and sub-marine batteries, are indeed horrible instruments of ruin. And they who use, must face these weapons. So powerful is the combined operation of all these causes, that it is doubtful whether another war will ever again be waged between any of the leading nations of Christendom.

Involuntary servitude, by which the many have been doomed to ignorance, degradation and toil, to administer to the pride and luxury of the few, is fast passing away. Slavery has existed in every land a formidable obstacle in the way of human improvement. Man has

ever been the tyrant over his brother. But the doom of slavery is sealed. Its knell is tolled. The degraded castes of India are breaking their chains. England, France, and even Spain, are saying to the oppressed, "go free." Nicholas, of Russia, on his throne of limitless despotism, from motives of national policy, is endeavoring to elevate his enslaved serfs to the dignity of freemen. And the American slaveholder, (even if his heart remain impervious to justice,) can not long resist the influences which are pouring in upon him from every quarter. Slavery has received its death blow. The religion, the literature, the popular sentiment of christendom has said, "it must die."

The wonderful facilities of intercommunication, now making almost miraculous progress, have opened a new era upon the globe. Railroads and steamboats, seem to bring the poles of the earth together, and to make neighbors of the most distant nations, breaking down the crumbling walls of prejudice, and effacing the decaying landmarks of hostile division. A good thought, conceived in the silent study chamber of the student, is no sooner uttered than it is echoed by a million voices in the streets of every city, and by the fireside of every farm house. An useful invention, made in the most secluded spot, is instantly conveyed to earth's remotest bounds. All these causes are tending most powerfully to hasten on the promised millenium.

III. *The present state of the sciences indicate the speedy and universal prevalence of Christianity.* It is one of the marked sayings of Lord Bacon, that a "little learning tendeth to atheism, but more bringeth us back to religion." Nearly all the sciences in their infancy, in the period of superficial knowledge, have been arrayed as hostile to christianity. Now, with hardly an exception, they defend and establish revealed religion.

The early astronomer, with but slight glimpses of the wonderful developments of this magnificent science, supposed that with telescope and diagram he could prove christianity false. But now in the comparative maturity of this science, when the astronomer sweeps the heavens with instruments of once unimagined power, and passing beyond our planetary system; piercing through the myriads of stars which compose the cluster of our own firmament, discovers, in the infinite abysses of space, other universes, other clusters of congregated suns and worlds—systems of every variety of form and structure, adapted to conditions of being and modes of life of which we can now form no conception, he obtains but the most interesting corroboration of God's word, that in heavenly places there are thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers—that there are many mansions in my Father's house—that God has erected fitting abodes for angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim. And now revealed religion has not a more admired, honored and efficient coadjutor than modern astronomy. And though conceited ignorance may cling with depraved affection to infidelity, Newton and Herschell find God's works confirmatory of his word.

Geology is rapidly rising to the rank of one of the noblest of sciences, developing the most stupendous facts. Superficial knowledge has boasted that these facts contradict God's word—that the history of creation, given by Moses, is repudiated by the cosmogony of geology. These mists of ignorance are now dispelled, and the skeptic's song of triumph is hushed. On the mountains and rocks, and the mighty mausoleums of the brutes that perish, eclipsing in their grandeur, the georgeous temple, the monumental bronze, the regal pyramid, God has engraven in eternal characters, the history of this world during those apparently endless cycles when the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and he has registered there the hour when he said, let us make man; and he has written there the story of those openings of the windows of heaven, and that breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, when the loftiest mountains were submerged in floods of rushing waters. And now, Geology may be called almost a Christian science, and she is converted from an ignorant foe, into an enlightened ally and friend.

Physiology has, in the darker ages of superficial investigation and misinterpreted phenomena, been judged hostile to the claims of revealed religion. And the believer has enquired with solicitude, and the infidel with triumph, how is it possible that one pair, Adam and Eve, could give birth to offspring so widely different as the black man and the white man? How can we reconcile the declaration of God that he made of one blood all the nations, when there are apparently now distinct species of men of such diversity of physical conformation as the jet black Hottentot and the fair skinned Caucasian. But these were the doubts and solicitudes of the day of ignorance. As physiological science has unfolded new developments, and established new facts, it has dispelled forever all those shadowy fears; it has established beyond all question the common origin of the whole human family. Enquire of Lawrence, of Humboldt, of Blumenbach, of any of the most enlightened physiognomists of the present day, and they will assure you that physiology confirms revelation, that disarmed of all hostility she follows, with winning homage, in the train of Christianity's triumphs.

Chronology has, in former years, been claimed as irreconcileably conflicting with the statements of the Bible. And men, with the spirit of Voltaire, credulous in unbelief, have found histories, which they have claimed as authentic, narrating the vicissitudes of mighty nations ten thousand years before the birth of Adam. And in one of the pyramids of Egypt, an astronomical chart was discovered, the famous Zodiac of Dendara, describing the position of the heavenly bodies, thousands of years before the chronology of the Bible admits that man was created. For a time, Europe resounded with the shouts of infidel exultation. But soon the truth's of Bacon's adage was verified, "a little learning tendeth to atheism, but more bringeth us back to religion." Farther investigation proved that these ancient histories were fables, and the loud vaunted Zodiac but a painted toy. And

now, the chronology of the Bible, and the chronology established by the history and the monuments of antiquity, coincide. Thus one after another, have all the sciences been vanquished, and compelled to pay tribute to the Christian faith. These are wonderful victories. There is now not a single science, which makes any pretence even of being antagonistic to the Bible. The ripest and the most cultivated intellects of the world, disciplined in the school of the sciences, are now elucidating and demonstrating the divine authority of God's word.

IV. *The past achievements of Christianity prove its eventual and perfect triumph.*—Imperial Rome, earth's master and tyrant, fell prostrate before her. Nor Goth nor Vandal could stay her progress. Even Nero could not build fires hot enough to burn up her energies. Even the wild beasts of the Coliseum could not daunt the Christian's heart. The philosopher has toiled in vain to undermine the deep foundations of the church, and the shafts of the satirists have fallen harmless from her adamantine shield. The hostility of earth has marshalled every possible power, in every possible combination, against Christianity, and all in vain.

When the idols of Ephesus, of Athens, of the Pantheon, crumble from their pedestals at the approach of Christ, can the miserable feather Gods of the Pacific and the mud idols of India resist his approach? When the Roman empire, in the plentitude of its power, exhausted its energies in bloody persecution in vain, can we fear that earth may furnish other powers of persecution yet more terrible?

When we have seen philosophersand poets, and historians, and dramatists, and princes, combine with the highest resources of wit and wealth;—and Christianity steadily advancing, notwithstanding all their endeavors, is it to be feared that other literary opponents will be able to accomplish that, which Hume and Voltaire and Gibbon and Frederic, the conspiring encyclopedists of Europe, in vain essayed?

He who looks upon the past triumphs of Christianity, even though it be only with the eye of a philosophic observer of cause and effect, must admit that the religion of Christ possesses an inherent energy, which must inevitably make it triumphant over the world.

V. *The triumphant advances Christianity is now making, indicate its universal extension.*—When we add to all the above considerations, the rapid progress of Christianity at the present day—a progress hitherto unparalleled—when we see revivals of religion multiplied through all the nations of christendom, our cities shaken by pentecostal power, and the most secluded villages re-echoing the song of Christian deliverance; when we see our young men and maidens by tens of thousands, with triumphant and rejoicing hearts, thronging the avenues to heaven, and our aged men, venerable with conflict and toil, exulting in the brightening glories of these latter days; when we see the youth of nearly all christendom in our colleges and higher seminaries of learning, instructed by men of piety, and genius and eloquence, in the

most elevated walks of literature and science, consecrating their acquisitions to the cause of Christ, and societies of benevolence collecting the resources and concentrating the exertions of millions of ready hands and hearts to reclaim the world to God; when we see missionaries of the gospel of salvation, with apostolic zeal, penetrating the darkest corners and the most savage tribes of earth—translating the Bible into every language, circulating tracts in every dwelling, and preaching the gospel in the very temples of heathenism, thus planting the banner of the cross upon the strongest bulwarks of satan's crumbling empire;—when we see hundreds of thousands of the children of idolaters, gathered into Christian schools and trained up in Christian faith and morals,—the Pagan systems of all Asia visibly tottering—the idols of all the islands of the sea rapidly following the vanquished God's of Tahiti, Rarotonga and Hawaii, how can we doubt that the prediction of the text is soon to be fulfilled—that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

Disciples of Jesus!—Are you suitably awake to the privileges and responsibilities of the age in which you live? These considerations should encourage you and inspire you with unwearied zeal. The whole world is soon to be reclaimed to God; and he has assigned to you an alloted part in this great achievement. He expects your fervent prayers, your self-denying toil, your energetic never tiring perseverence. Are you aroused and at your work, fulfilling your vows, concentrating the intensity of your emotions, the stability of your principles and the energies of a holy life to the salvation of the perishing? Never were Christians so highly favored as now, never so encouraged as now. Followers of Christ! How many of the friends you love may now be won to Jesus by fidelity,—how many ruined by worldliness and neglect! Soon you will stand at God's bar. Your friends and the present world will meet you there. Will they bless you, or condemn you? Will they bear witness to your consistent piety, or to your inconsistent life? Will they testify to your faithful and heartfelt exertions to lead them to the Savior, or will they attest, that, with a worldly, a frivolous and a careless spirit, you left them to perish unwarned? Fix your eye on death and the judgment, and live in view of those awful realities.

But there are many who yet reject the Savior. You are living in practical infidelity; saying, by your conduct, to the world around you, that the commands of the Savior you will not obey,—that the warnings of the gospel you will not heed. Is there no appeal that can reach your heart? Is there no motive in heaven's joy to allure you,—none in hell's horrors to repel you from sin? Has death, with its pallid cheek and palsied tongue, no voice that you can hear? Has the dark grave, where you soon must sleep, no influence to move you? Is there nothing worthy of a thought in the awful thunders of the resurrection trumpet, at whose peal your mouldering body shall

start again into eternal life? And can your ear be dead, and your heart be insensible, to the decisions of that judgment day, which will place you forever an angel in heaven, or a fiend in hell? O! my hearers, these are awful, awful realities. The world is awakening to them; breaking satan's chains; thronging to Christ. The young, the old, the heathen even, are crowding to the mountain of the Lord's house. And will you, can you, my friends, slight mercy's offers—squander probation's hours—brave judgment's terrors, and go down into a grave of stubborn rebellion and hopeless despair? Will you again this day say to your pleading Savior, "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Will you still encounter the hazard of an unprepared death, of being cut down at a stroke by the Divine displeasure?

You have but a few days more to decide whether you will join the triumphant cause of your Redeemer, or share in the terrible defeat of satan and his legions. O! friends, hastening to death and judgment, harden not your hearts against these truths; disappoint not the hopes of angels; destroy not yourselves. Now seek and obtain an interest in that free salvation, which shall cheer your heart while you live and when you die,—and which shall introduce you to that celestial world where there is no sorrow and no night.

SERMON CCCLVI.

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THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach his name among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."—Gal. i. 15, 16.

THE spirit of real and exalted piety, is the true *spirit of missions*. Just so much as every professed christian has of the spirit of Jesus Christ, just so much he has of the spirit of missions. True piety admits of no "serving two masters," of no "halting between two opinions."

The exalted christian is a man of one great idea. His aim is single. His purpose is uncombined. He acknowledges and obeys but one impulse. Mighty and overpowering as the principle of gravitation in physics—quick and energetic as the impact of the electric force, is the operation of grace on his heart. The principle of religion is the atmosphere in which he moves—its devotions are the breath he breathes—its provisions are the food on which his soul subsists. Jesus Christ is his Alpha and Omega. He knows no other master—he regards no other authority. Jesus Christ is his rock and refuge—his buckler and shield—the horn of his salvation, and the lifter up of his head. Often and gratefully does he breathe,

> "Other refuge have I none;
> Hangs my helpless soul on thee."

Often and fervently does he beseech,

> "Leave, O leave me not alone;
> Still support and comfort me."

The love of Christ is the main-spring of all the machinery of his ac-

tion; the word of Christ the only chart of his voyage through this world. The hope of glory through Christ is the magnetic power that continually draws him on from earth towards heaven. In Christ he exclaims,

> "In Christ, I've all my soul's desire;
> His Spirit does my heart inspire;
> With boundless wishes, large and high,
> And Christ will all my wants supply."

Now this spirit of true and exalted piety, we affirm, is also the true spirit of missions. At what moment soever it seizes the soul, at that moment also the holy passion rises to glorify him, who has translated the soul from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God—at that moment, there begins to sprout the germ of a hallowed principle—fruitful of all blessed charities, and ready, without stipulation, to give all its power of production to the glory of the Master, and to the salvation of immortal souls.

Such was evidently the effect of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Such was clearly the development of religion in his soul. Scarcely had the heavenly vision burst upon his dazzled eyes, when he cried in mingled terror and submission, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." Forthwith, when he was baptized and had received his sight, he went out in the very city to which he had been sent to persecute the saints—preached to the Jews, whose High Priest had commissioned him to hale men and women to prison, and in their very synagogue—that Jesus Christ, whom they crucified, is the Son of God. It was no wonder that all that heard it were amazed, and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them that called on His name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the Chief Priests?"

But Paul himself explains to us, in our text, the character and cause of this phenomenon. The spirit of Christ had taken possession of his mind, and immediately the spirit of missions entered into his soul, and became his ruling principle. "But," says he, "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Let us, dear brethren, farther inquire respecting this spirit of missions.

I. What manner of spirit is it?
II. Does it exist in its true character in the churches?
III. Whose duty and privilege is it to possess it?
IV. How may it be encouraged and raised to its proper standard in the different churches?

May the spirit of light and power that informed and impelled the

Apostle, aid and impress our views of this great subject! For Christ's sake. Amen.

Concerning the spirit of missions, then,

I. We inquire, first, what is it?

Taking our cue from the declaration and conduct of the great primitive, apostolic-missionary, who speaks in the text, we pronounce this spirit to be, *that of a prompt, unconditional, total, self-sacrificing, all-sacrificing dedication to the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ, at home and abroad, among nominal christians and real heathen.*

1. The spirit of missions is prompt. It has no affinity with that cold and killing charity, which says, "Go and come again, and I will give thee." It does not synchronize with the purpose of Felix, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." It has weighed the divine declaration, "Go to, ye that say to-day or to-morrow,—whereas ye know not what a day may bring forth." It has entertained the precept, "What thine hand findeth to do, do with thy might."

Perhaps it has reflected, that while the christian is pausing in his purpose, or waiting for more ability, or a fitter opportunity, souls, by thousands, are sinking to irredeemable wo.

Perhaps the christian has imagined himself on the summit of a rock, high and secure. Far below him the sea is lashed to fury, and dashing in foamy spray around the base. On its lengthened and steeply inclined side, an innumerable multitude of his fellow beings are standing aghast with fear, or sliding down into the boiling, ingulphing waves below. Oh! would it be a time for him and his compeers, with vast coils of rope and cordage, and a great anchor of hope fastened by that wonderful cable of promise, ample for the support of untold millions without breaking, all lying on the rock. Oh! would it then be a time for him to hesitate and delay instant effort—to raise the question and stop to discuss it—*are the ropes long enough to reach them—are the cords strong enough to hold these poor sufferers—will they seize hold of the ropes if they were lowered?* No. No. He would say, let us *try*—let us *try*. Let us let them *all down* at once. Yes: the ropes are strong enough. Perhaps they will take hold, and then the poor sufferers will be rescued from a watery grave, and oh, how we will rejoice together when they are saved!

But the spirit of missions is as full of feeling, as of reflection. Its principle is settled, and it needs but little reflection. It looks down from the top of the rock; it sees the brother on the slippery side; he slides—he falls; the deep waters are ready to swallow him up; he hears his low wail of distress—help—help. Oh! the christian cannot stop to think; he throws the coil of cordage from the top; he cries, take hold—take hold—we will help you. O God! save the suffering. Deliver from going down to the pit, those who are ready to

perish! "Immediately,—immediately," said Paul, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." He asked not,—Will they listen to me? He returned not to Jerusalem, to ask counsel of the Apostles whether it was best for him to make the attempt; but *at once* he went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus.

2. I remark again, that the spirit of missions is a spirit of unconditional dedication to the service of Christ.

Paul conferred not with flesh and blood. He took no counsel, as we have seen, with those who were apostles before him,—who might, perhaps, have suggested to him the propriety, of one so recently converted and so late a persecutor, of introducing himself very cautiously as a servant of Christ, and an advocate of his doctrine. Much less did he confer with his former associates, the Priests and Pharisees, who would have upbraided him with his apostacy, and threatened him with the exemplary vengeance of the Sanhedrim. Least of all did he consult with his personal relations, his mother and brothers and friends—who might have overwhelmed him with their tears of horrid regret, and melted away the firmness of his purpose by the warmth of their unfeigned sorrow. Paul made no stipulations. He had no mental reservations. He asked no excuse—no delay. And precisely such must be the spirit of every Christian who would efficiently subserve the interests of Christ's kingdom. Like Samuel, he must submit himself, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Like Israel at Carmel he must exclaim, "The Lord he is God—ALL that the Lord hath spoken, that will we do." He must feel the force of the rebuke which Jesus Christ gave to the man who said, "Let me first go and bury my father." "*Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me.*"

3. But I have run insensibly into another attribute of the spirit of missions—it is the *totality of its dedication:* its self sacrificing, all sacrificing nature.

It reserves nothing—ABSOLUTELY NOTHING from this holy consecration. Time, talents, power, property, ease, friends, home, comforts, all are laid at the feet of Christ.

This was eminently the case with the apostle to the Gentiles. On the altar of this devotion he laid his fame, which would have been more immediately promoted by continuing to sit at the feet of Gamaliel, and directly succeeding to the place of the chief Rabbi.

Here, he sacrificed those brilliant talents which would have gained him renown on earth in any ordinary walk of life.

Here, he devoted his time, without interruption, from the day that he left the house of his blindness to the day of his death. Here, he offered up home and friends as a sacrifice, and became a stranger to his mother's children, and an accursed exile from his father's home.

Here, he compromitted the ease and comfort which he would have enjoyed as an honored Rabbin, and gave himself up to labors almost superhuman, and to perils almost alarming and frightful—and to sufferings almost beyond the power of man to bear. And on this altar,

too, he sacrificed his life, in the same bloody tragedy of persecution at Rome. All this he did and suffered, that he might preach Christ among the heathen, "and make known to them who were without God and without hope in the world, that only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved."

And this, dear brethren, is the only true spirit of piety or of missions in any age of the world. If it was appropriate for Paul, a recent and partially enlightened convert from Judaism—then surely, it must be so for those who have "from a child known the scriptures," and for many years professed to feel its power and obey its monitions. If it was appropriate and not extravagant in the age of Paul, when the group of heathen nations was comparatively small—how much more is it so now, when their number amounts almost to millions upon millions, multiplied!

II. Let us now direct our attention to the inquiry, Does this spirit exist in its true character in the churches?

It will be conceded that this inquiry involves some difficulty and delicacy. To impute or infer wrong in individual cases, without a full knowledge of all the circumstances, would be doing manifest injustice. To ascribe to the inefficiency or sinful inaction of man, that which was prevented or retarded by the purpose and providence of God, would be to reproach a creature for not accomplishing an impossibility, and perhaps, too, reproaching the great Ruler of the world for the tardiness of his operations. But our discussion will not proceed on any dim and doubtful references to the inscrutable purposes of God, or the possible agency of men; but on the known and ordinary calculations respecting the manifestations of character, and the results of human effort. On these premises we may approximate a just conclusion, by considering,

1. The number of Christian ministers as compared with the number of Christian men engaged in other professions and avocations.

That all Christians are not bound to be ministers or missionaries, does not require an argument to prove. Even in aggressive war, there must be some to abide by the staff, as well as some to go forth to the battle. All Christian men are not qualified by nature, though they were by grace, to be leaders of the "sacramental host." Every one cannot enjoy those advantages of intellectual culture which are ordinarily necessary as a qualification to preach the gospel. But with all these necessary exceptions, the question still recurs; *is a just proportion of Christian men devoted to the business of propagating the faith of Christ?* Here we must inquire—What is the just proportion, and then what is the fact? As to the first of these inquiries, we have a very peculiar and divine solution. In the Jewish economy, one tribe out of twelve—and by ordinary calculation, one man out of twelve was devoted to the service of religion. Now, abate the due proportion of priests to all the Levites by another ratio of one twelfth, or even one twentieth, and then there might be one priest to every two

hundred and forty men, or four hundred and eighty souls of the Jewish population; and that alone for the *domestic* service. Or, think on the divine claim for which the tribe of Levi was a substitute, viz: that the first born son of every family in all their tribes should belong to the Lord. Ah, brethren, is there any such proportionate consecration to the peculiar service of the kingdom of Christ among Christians of our day in any of the churches? The most accurate statistics that we have been permitted to see, do not give to our domestic service a minister of any Christian name to a thousand of our population: and of the ministers of all denominations, taking one third as the proportion of men to women in the churches; only one in forty of all who profess Jesus Christ have given themselves to the service of the ministry both at home and abroad.

2. We may aid and correct our judgment on this subject by a comparison of the number of ministers who remain at home and who go abroad. Our calculation here on such imperfect statistics as we could reach, is as follows: among evangelical denominations, taken all together, not over one in ten. Among the Moravians, Methodists and Baptists, it may be somewhat more; among the Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents, somewhat less. The number of disabled, diverted and unemployed ministers is nearly as great as that of missionaries. And does this proportion, my brethren, indicate the true spirit of missions? While the number of heathen and irreligious people is to that of nominal Christians nearly as six to one, and the number of Evangelical Christians to the rest of the world, as only one to twenty-five or thirty—does the spirit of missions move on the mass when there is but one minister out of forty Christians, and one missionary to ten ministers." Oh, how different from this state of things it must be, before the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the hills and all nations shall flow unto it?

3. I may propose another test of the prevalence of the spirit of missions. It is the amount of money spent by christians for the propagation of the religion of Christ, as compared either with what the world spends on favorite objects, or what christians themselves spend on important concerns.

Could we carry out this calculation with precision, many singular facts would be disclosed. But I may only say that the expense of the late Chinese war is greater than the expense of all christendom, in attempting to evangelize the world; the expense of maintaining one ship on our African station, is greater than all the United States are incurring for the conversion of the world.

The expense arising from the consumption of tea, tobacco, rum, or wine, severally, is greater than the expense of the whole christian world in giving the gospel to the heathen. Oh, if there were a spirit in the church to pay for the progress of religion as there is in the world to pay for ambition—for luxury, soon would the missionary treasury run over with abundance.

But judge further, by the comparative expense christians themselves

incur for the cause of Christ. It is calculated that the Jews gave one third—some judge one half of all their income for the service of religion. What do the churches and individual christians of our churches give? I suppose in a church of one hundred male members, in a city, including many wealthy men, it is not extravagant to calculate that, on an average, their annual income is $2000 each, or $200,000 a year. Would it not be deemed liberal if that church should give $2000 per annum for missions? But that amounts to but one hundredth part of the general income. Does this indicate the true spirit of missions?

Or see yonder a christian parent. He is blessed with an ample income. He does not hesitate a moment to spend $500 a year, on the education of his son or daughter: but if he has given $50 or $100 to missions, he feels that he has honored his profession and been quite generous to the cause. Oh, brethren, is the spirit of missions such as it was in Paul, in the bosom of this rich brother?

4. But in the absence of all precise rules of judgment, we might approach near to a just conclusion, by considering what has been already accomplished on the missionary field. By the zeal and self-denial—the missionary character and labors of the apostles, with the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying—they spread abroad the knowledge of Christ, through a great portion of the known world, in a few years, notwithstanding the immense difficulties of travelling and transmission. It is now nearly a half century since the revival of the missionary spirit in the evangelical churches, and what has been accomplished? We gratefully record that goodly foundations have been laid—valuable materials have been gathered—but the water-table has been scarcely put up of the magnificent temple in which all nations are to worship God in spirit and in truth.

On the wide waste of heathenism, here and there, a fountain has been opened—an oasis has begun to bloom and spread—a tent, as of way-faring men, has been pitched; but they are so widely distant from each other, that storms of faithlessness and fear often terrribly blow between, and nearly darken all hope of the future. In the night of ages, which so long lay on the nations, a light has been kindled on a Bethel here and a Pisgah there; but they are so few and far between, that no ray from either, meets and mingles on the still, dark, and gloomy interspace. Ah, could this be the state of things if the true spirit of missions was rife in the churches? Would not thousands have risen in the spirit of Norbal de Nobilibus, or Xavier—of Hans Egede or Fred. Schwartz? Would not all Christendom have become a vast propaganda, into whose treasury the royal legacies of the rich, and humble gifts of the poor, would have fallen together?—Would not now the voice of Christian praise have resounded from Astoria to the Horn—from Good Hope to the pillars of Hercules—thence to Spilslingen—from the Naze over the Humalagruy to Comorin, and among all the islands of the sea? O, my brethren, we have heard of this spirit, we have seen it, in some individual examples, flash

like a beautiful meteor across the horizon; but we are yet waiting to see it stand, like the king of day, on high meridian, filling all the sphere of human life with light, and warmth, and joy, and praise.

III. Our next inquiry is, Whose duty and privilege is it to possess this missionary spirit?

This inquiry may be thought identical with another, similar in its terms, but far different in its answer, viz: Whose duty is it to engage in the missionary work—to leave country, home and friends, and to preach Christ to the heathen?

This latter is an exceedingly difficult question, when it is referred to any given individual. So many local and personal circumstances may enter into a judgment respecting personal duty, that the most single minded individual, and the most practised adviser, may be at fault in decision. But as to the general indications, they seem to be plainly like the following:

1. *Aptness for acquisition and instruction.* Much is to be learned of the languages and habits of life and thought of the heathen, and much is to be insinuated into the minds of the natives by the power and working of the grace of God; which no one, who is not blest with natural aptitude for the work, may hope to compass till he dies.

2. *Mental culture and discipline are necessary, for the same reason.*

3. *Supposed talent ought to be tried to a certain extent.* An entire novice ought *in general* not to engage in this, nor ought such an one to be chosen for this most difficult and responsible work.

4. But *ardent, unquestionable piety,* is an indispensable indication of duty. Let no one dream of the missionary work whose heart does not heave with the love of Christ, and almost break for the longing it has for the salvation of souls. Like Paul, the habitual state of the missionary soul should be, "Wo is me, if I preach not the gospel." Wo is me, if I leave these poor heathen to perish without every practicable effort on my part to save them from death.

5. *Providential direction* is a prime indication. If God remarkably open the way—raise up friends to aid the necessary preparation—turn my attention often to the subject—constantly touch my heart with pity and desire for the heathen—and when I am ready, open a field for my labor—how can I then doubt the will of heaven as to my destination, and the work I am to do.

But must the spirit of missions be *restricted to those who are called to go forth to preach,* or to be helpers of those who do preach? By NO MEANS. Is religion one thing to the missionary, and another thing to the minister or christian at home? Is the Savior more dear to him who is called to grapple with difficulties among the heathen, than he should be to him who serves Him in quietness and peace in his native land? I trow not. The christian at home is bound to pity and love the souls that are perishing for lack of vision, precisely as much as the

christian who is among them and beholds their abominations and wretchedness.

And is it not practicable to cherish and exhibit that spirit just as much in the one case as in the other? If the missionary engages unconditionally in the cause of God in foreign climes, cannot the christian unconditionally devote himself to the same cause at home? If the missionary make all manner of sacrifices of ease, honor, property, friends and fame, abroad, cannot the christian do the same at home?

If the missionary abroad engages promptly and vigorously in the work of translating, teaching and preaching, on heathen ground, cannot the christian at home show the same spirit, by preaching, giving, collecting, persuading, in behalf of the cause? I conclude, therefore, that it is the duty, aye, and *the blessed privilege* of the minister at home, to have just as much of the missionary spirit as his brother, already among the barbarous tribes; just as much the duty and the privilege of the lay brother, and the christian lady, to exhibit the missionary spirit, as of the lay-helper and the female teacher, and the missionary's wife, on a heathen shore. I affirm the certain and solemn reciprocal proposition with which this discourse commenced—that the true spirit of piety is the spirit of missions—and the spirit of missions is nothing more than the true spirit of piety.

IV. I close with the practical inquiry, How shall this spirit be encouraged, or raised to its proper standard in the different parts of the church?

In answer to the inquiry, I venture to offer the following suggestions: Here,

1. The fact, the desideratum, is *to arouse the attention of the churches.* This must be done by agitating the subject. Let it be constantly thrown before the churches. Let them hear till their ears tingle, and their hearts ache. Let the Herald visit them. Let the Day-Spring shine upon them; let the messenger come to their houses; let the ambassador reside with them. Deluge them with information. Iterate and re-iterate the story of ignorance and crime, and idolatry and misery, which blacken the annals of heathen history. Tell them also, how many poor heathen and renowned chiefs, like Kuakuira, Africaner, and Keophlani, have lived and died in the Lord. Let every minister be an agitator. Let every minister by day and night cry aloud and spare not. Let them lift up their voices, like a trumpet, to declare the sin of those who manifest no fellowship in the work and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the blessings of those who are workers together with him, in extending that kingdom which is "not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Yes. Let every christian agitate, agitate, until the whole christian mind is filled with the grand enterprize of publishing peace on earth, and good will towards men.

2. The second desideratum is, *to impress the hearts of the christian community with a deep and touching compassion for the destitute, and with a stirring sense of their accountability, in the premises.* Let every christian be carried around the brow of the mountain, encompassing the valley of the shadow of death. Let him look upon all those dead bones that are so very dry. Let his eye affect his heart, while he meditates on the bondage of ignorance, idolatry, cruelty, parricide, infanticide, pilgrimages, heathen feasts, suttees, human sacrifices, and all the unnatural abominations of the heathen; and let his heart melt with pity when the voice of lamentations, mourning and wo, strikes his ear from the bloody Morai of the South Sea Islands, from the sweltering fire-house of the Parsees, from the devil's bust of the African—yes, and from the ornate mosque of the sensual Mahometan—from the plain synagogue of the outcast Jew, and from the splendid cathedral of the deluded Romanist. And with his melting pity for their wretchedness, teach him to mingle a deep sense of his own responsibility. Let him remember that God has ordained the illumination of the world through the instrumentality of the church. He has bidden her to "arise and shine;" that he has commanded every christian according to his measure, to preach the gospel to every creature. Make him to understand, that if the heathen perish, he cannot be innocent of their blood, unless he has done what he could to save them. In a word, let the spirit of missions, full of affectionate and earnest desire, take hold of his soul, and you will have almost grasped the lever by which a fallen world can be raised to hope and heaven.

3. The third and last desideratum, is *the agency of a divine* power—the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit of God. Ah, brethren, "Paul may plant and Apollos water; God must give the increase." The barriers of ignorance, and depravity, and inveterate hatred are too high and strong to be levelled by human power. It is not "by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." .... Ministers and christians will never feel the magnitude and obligation of the duty to evangelize the world; they never will be prepared to make the sacrifices and do the labors so promptly, so energetically, so perseveringly as the cause demands, and the dark, untutored heathen will never submit their prejudices, and bow to the law of Christ, until the spirit shall "be poured out from on high," in some such glorious effusion as fell on the primitive disciples, and on the multitude, when they were gathered together, on the day of Pentecost.

O, my brethren, ye that make mention of the Lord—ye that long for the glory of his appearing—remember this, that this spirit of power was first given when the disciples were making supplication with one accord in one place, and is usually given to the earnest, united, importunate prayers of God's people in every age. Therefore let us not keep silence; therefore let us strain our eye upon the valley of vision, and cry, day and night,—O breath, come, O breath, come and breathe upon the slain, that they may live. Therefore, having with Daniel understood from the books the number of the years, and

that the time is at hand, let us set our face unto the Lord God to seek this blessing, by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes, saying, O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and defer not, for thine own sake, O our God. And thus, in *exerting all human agency, and invoking all divine aid*, we may live to see the day, "when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; when the kingdom, and the dominion under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people and the saints of the Most High God."

A SHORT SERMON.

NECESSITY OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

"Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."—Acts iii. 19.

I. In fulfilment of this interesting prophecy, great and glorious revivals of religion are to be expected with increasing frequency and power.

1. Revivals of religion are necessary to the accomplishment of God's purposes. Great means will be necessary to bring these great purposes to pass. But great things never were done, and never will be done, without great revivals of religion. All the orthodoxy in the world will not do it. Speculation is cold and ineffectual without the power of the Holy Ghost. Theoretical systems will do nothing, unless warmed by revivals.

2. Revivals are necessary to counteract the luxury and corruption which naturally follow in the train of human industry and business. The common exertions, and slow effects of the ordinary means used, will never prevent the growth of intemperance, or control the love of worldly pleasure.

3. Great revivals are necessary to prevent the re-action which may be expected from the world. The wicked will soon be alarmed at the increase of holiness and strict religion. There will be a great conflict. And then if we do not have revivals, things will go back. Zion will not be able to stand in so dreadful a conflict. The alarm and the conflict are, indeed, already begun, and we must have revivals.

4. Revivals are necessary to provide the men for evangelizing the world. This is already seen to be the case. Where and how else can men be found? The expense is too great to be borne by the churches, as they now feel and act, while they have also to meet the expenses of worldly conformity and fashion, and think they *must* "lay up treasures on earth," so that they can say to their souls, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

5. Without revivals in the Pagan fields, we shall be driven off

again. Orthodoxy will never convert the world, without the power of God. Infidels see that human means will not convert the world. And they confidently calculate that the thing is impracticable. So it is, except by revivals.

Therefore we may conclude that great and glorious revivals of religion are to be expected.

II. Great revivals *are* expected by the church. There is a general expectation of great things about to take place. Christians are, in some degree, waking up and turning their attention to these things, and feeling the necessity of great means. Great expectations in the church have always preceded great events.

1. The means of promoting revivals are vastly increased. Bibles, Tracts, Hymns, Music, Sabbath Schools, Infant Schools, Benevolent Societies for Missions, Education, Seamen, Temperance, &c. are provided. The means of revivals are greater a thousand fold than they were fifty years ago. More seed is sown in one year, than used to be in ten.

2. Revival preaching is more common, and more generally demanded in the church. Religious theory has been much modified by experience. The doctrine of divine sovereignty, co-operating with human means, is better understood. Truth is exhibited more scripturally; self-righteousness waiting for God's time, is less encouraged in sinners; and by many preachers wholly exploded. The obligations of repentance, faith, and a holy life, are pressed upon sinners, and they are urged to an immediate submission, by the motives which the *Scriptures* furnish. The ability and consequent duty of complying with the terms of salvation are extensively recognised. It is understood that revivals are not miracles, but are brought about by the use of means which are adapted to the end. Mulitudes are convinced by incontrovertible facts, that where the proper means are used in a proper spirit, a revival never fails to follow.

3. Revivals are of a new order. They are more frequent. We used to think, once in ten, twenty, thirty, or even fifty years, was as often as a church could expect a revival. They are also more generally rapid and powerful in their progress. They are more pure, more free from extravagance and wildfire.

4. The spirit of prayer is better understood, and the efficacy of prayer more realized.

It is believed that there is an efficacy in prayer to move our Heavenly Father to grant blessings. The spirit of prayer is increased in the church. Prayer meetings are much more frequent; seasons for definite prayer are more highly valued, and more frequent. All these things show that the church is expecting great revivals.

III. What shall we do, then, in view of all this? Why we must, 1. Believe it. 2. Rejoice in it. 3. Prepare to work in revivals.

Gird up the loins of our mind. Put away sloth and conformity to the world, and bitterness, &c. &c.

Shall we be employed about things of minor importance when such great things are before us?

Above all things, let us not be found opposing or hindering revivals, either by unholy lives, or by slandering revivals, or even by speaking lightly of them.

God forbid, brethren, that we should do any thing to strengthen the hands of the enemy.

HOW TO FEEL OUR SINS, OR, STRIVE TO ENTER IN.

Persons who begin to *wish* they were christians, are often much discouraged by the difficulty they feel in setting their sins before them in a sufficiently strong light. They hear and they believe repentance to be the first step in their wished for change, and it is so. But it is a mistake to suppose a sense of sin will always be felt the most keenly before the heart is made right. On the contrary, every step we take in the christian life, shows us more clearly the sinfulness of our past course; every step towards the Sun of righteousness, causes the darkness behind us to appear more gross. If, then, we cannot feel the hatefulness of sin as we wish, let us feel the beauty of holiness. Let us "set God always before us;" let us contemplate his glorious perfections, till incited to endeavors after perfect conformity to his holy will. Every effort we make, will show us more and more of the exceeding sinfulness of our hearts. The more strenuously we aim at perfect conformity to the will of God, the more deeply sensible shall we become of our unworthiness in the sight of Him who can charge even the angels with folly. "Save us, Lord Jesus, or we perish," will be our cry.

Persons often profess to wish they were christians, while yet they are making no efforts to become such. They wish they could feel their sins, and yet they refuse so much as to look at them. Now it is absurd for a sinner to expect to feel a strong repugnance for sin, while he continues to indulge in it. A sense of sin implies a knowledge of something better; we must strive after holiness. We must take our staff in our hands,—show ourselves ready and resolute, and then the pillar of fire will be before us, to lead us from slavery and bondage. Shall we expect to receive the aids of God's Spirit without any effort of our own? Let us rather seek for it in the faithful performance of the services he requires,—in obedience to every command. Let us ever manifest a desire to spend and be spent in his

service, and we shall receive aid. While we neglect religious duties, the more indifference we feel about our own sinfulness; the more we do for God, the stronger will become our attachment to him, and the deeper our repentance for our sins against him.

The grace of God is for those who, by a patient continuance in well doing, show that, in some measure, they value it as they ought. Let us consider the magnitude of the reward promised to those who, in sincerity, seek to know and do the will of God. Shall we think any sacrifice too great, if we may but obtain assistance in fashioning our hearts and lives after the pattern held up to us in the Bible? Shall any effort be esteemed too great, that shall command, as its reward, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory?"

THE JOYS OF REPENTANCE.

"Which is the most delightful emotion?" said an instructer of the deaf and dumb to his pupils, after teaching them the names of our various feelings. The pupils turned instinctively to their slates, to write an answer; and one, with a smiling countenance, wrote *Joy*. It would seem as if none could write anything else; but another, with a look of more thoughtfulness, put down *Hope*. A third, with a beaming countenance, wrote *Gratitude*. A fourth wrote *Love*, and other feelings still, claimed the superiority on other minds. One turned back with a countenance full of peace, and yet a tearful eye, and the teacher was surprised to find upon her slate, "*Repentance* is the most delightful emotion." He turned to her with marks of wonder, in which her companions doubtless participated, and asked—"Why?" "Oh," said she, in the expressive language of looks and gestures, which marks these mutes—"it is so delightful to be humbled before God!"

She had been one of Nature's lofty spirits, whose very aspect seemed to demand the deference of those around her, and who had strong claims to it. She had recently become "as a little child," under the influence of the gospel, and pride had not only yielded with sweet submission to the will of God, but had bowed without a murmur to the reproaches and almost persecutions of companions who hated the light when thus reflected from the countenance, and conduct, and conversation of one like themselves. She had been utterly ignorant of moral obligation. She had learned the evil of sin, and, at the same moment, the ample provision for its forgiveness—and the humbling melting of the soul, in penitential love, and gratitude, and joy, surpassed, in her view, all that the whole circle of emotions could furnish.

Reader! Do you know this joy? Do you know from your o experience how "*delightful* it is to be humbled before God?" R pentance is, indeed, a duty—you admit it, and you have perhaps deavored to perform it. But it has been *only as a duty*. Has it be like a Catholic penance, entered upon with resolution—perform with exactness—and finished with perseverance *as a task*,—pain and irksome and humiliating in itself; but pleasant only in its con tenance, and tolerable only for its effects? If so, you have reason tremble, but it has been only "the sorrow of the world which wo eth *death*." You have all the sorrow and self-denial of religion wi out any of its joys, or any claim to its hopes—of all men, surely su are the most miserable? Of all men, they have the strongest indu ment to turn to God with their whole hearts, to sweeten their sorr with love and gratitude, instead of rendering it more bitter with fe and distrust. The great Master of the christian desires *willing s vants*, and will not admit the *bond-slaves* of mere duty to his presen

If you know this "delightful emotion,"—if you find it hereaft you will prove it by indulging it often. The occasions will not ce on this side heaven. The opportunity will recur every hour, and n ver will your peace be sweeter, or your hopes surer, than when, li this deaf mute, you find it "*delightful to be humbled before God*," a feel "*the joys of repentance*."

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SERMON CCCLVII.

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SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

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"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."—John iv. 24.

It is from the Bible alone, directly or indirectly, that we gain correct ideas, either of the natural attributes, or of the moral character of God. However distinctly we may trace the impress of his hand in his works when we already believe in his existence and true attributes, and however possible it might be for man, if his powers were unaffected by sin, to discover from the things that are made the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator, yet the whole history of the race shows that, for this purpose, nature is not to man its own interpreter.

Everywhere, and under all circumstances, men "have become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart has been darkened." If the great doctrines of the unity and spirituality of God, did, indeed, glimmer in upon the minds of some of the heathen philosophers, yet no *people* of ancient times received and retained them except the Jews. Hence, when we pass from the heathen philosophers and poets to the prophets and poets of the Jews, we are in a new world, as respects every thing that relates to God. Here his being and attributes are set forth in the highest strains of poetry. And this poetry is also truth. It is philosophy transfigured, and therefore it never

grows old. Even now, after more than three thousand years, after every discovery of science, it stands in all the original freshness and unapproachable majesty of the starry heavens.

But what they thus set forth in poetry, is disclosed in its simplest form by our Savior. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Probably few have read this passage without being struck by it. How simple the words! The doctrine stated—how great! yet how simply, and naturally, and incidentally introduced! The inference respecting the worship of God—how irresistible, and important, and all-comprehensive, and yet how entirely in opposition to the prevailing opinions both among Jews and Gentiles! Certainly if there is an instance in which the annunciation of a truth, in distinction from the manifestation of power, may be said to produce sublime emotions, it is this.

The text is naturally divided into two parts.—The fact, or doctrine stated, and the inference from it. It is not my purpose, at this time, to dwell upon the doctrine; I propose rather to consider the characteristics of acceptable worship here stated; and the best means of promoting it.

The characteristics of acceptable worship, as given by our Savior, are two. It must be, first, *in spirit*, and second, *in truth*.

What then is included in the worship of God in spirit, or in spiritual worship?

I. And first, I remark, that to worship God in spirit, we must worship him *as a spirit*, and without the intervention of any sensible forms. In the present state of man, he does not readily form to himself the idea of a God who is a spirit, infinite, eternal and holy. Accustomed to objects of sense, he seeks for something visible, or represents God to himself by the conceptive faculty, under some sensible form. Little aware of the distinction between a conception and an idea, or that the true *idea* of God, *must* exclude any particular conception or imagination, he is ready to disbelieve in the existence of any thing of which he cannot conceive, and when he would think of it, there is a mere blank in his mind. When he would pray to God, he seems to be praying to nothing. He asks in substance the questions of a heathen, as recently given by a missionary—"Why, how can I serve him without an idol? Where can I put the flowers? Where shall I burn the frankincense? How shall I bathe him?" He forgets that even in the natural world he is under the necessity of believing in the existence of many things, as magnetism and gravitation, of which he cannot form a conception. He believes in the existence of these, he has an idea of them as forces, he reasons and acts with reference to them; but if they were intelligent and moral beings, and he were to attempt to address them, he would find the same difficulty that he does in addressing a pure spirit.

But who would think of representing magnetism or gravitation under any material form? Who does not see that any such form must lead the mind from the true idea? But the idea of spirit, requires the exclusion of all the positive conceptions that belong to matter, and the investiture of substance with qualities directly opposite. How utterly absurd then must it be to think of obtaining aid in our approach to a spiritual being by any material image, or any symbolical representation! By any attempt to represent, either to the eye, or to the imagination, "the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," the true *idea* of him is not only perverted, but degraded; and all the purifying and elevating effects of worship are destroyed.

Nor is the case altered from the fact that God became manifest in the flesh, since it is not by the eye of sense or of imagination, but of faith, that any thing of what Christ did for our salvation can be perceived. Well has it been said by McLaurin,—"Men may paint Christ's outward sufferings, but not that inward excellency from whence their virtue flowed. They may paint one crucified, but how can that distinguish the Savior from the criminals? We may paint the outward appearance of his sufferings, but not the inward bitterness, or invisible causes of them. Men can paint the cursed tree, but not the curse of the law that made it so. Men can paint Christ bearing the cross to Calvary, but not Christ bearing the sins of many." If we would worship God in spirit, we must worship him as a spirit.

That God is a spirit, and that he is God, implies that he is infinite and eternal, and possessed of all those natural attributes which are necessary, not indeed as a cause, but as a condition, to all our worship. It is not *because* God is omnipotent or omniscient that we worship him, though if he could not see our worship, or could not do for us what we need, that worship would be vain; but it is because of the moral character which is associated with, and controls these natural attributes.

II. I observe, therefore, in the second place, that the worship of God in spirit, implies the worship of him as a *holy* God. By the holiness of God, I mean all those attributes and expressions of his moral character by which he shows that he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity. Here we find the central and indispensable element in the character of God which makes him the object of worship at all. This stands among the attributes of God, like mount Zion, crowned with the temple among the mountains that were round about Jerusalem. The other attributes are majestic and venerable, but it is from their association with this.

As God is great, he challenges our awe, as he is benevolent, our love; but it is only as he is perfectly holy, that we yield him that delightful reverence and entire moral complacency, which is the frankincense of spiritual worship. It is only those exercises of the

spirit in which we gain clear ideas of the moral character of God, as manifested in his providence, and law, and gospel, and in which we are strongly affected with admiration and love of him as *such* a God, that can be properly called spiritual. If God were not holy, whatever external homage might be rendered, he could not receive true worship from any moral being; and being holy, no moral being can render him true worship without complacency in his holiness.

III. But I observe, thirdly, that the worship of God in spirit, implies that we worship him *with* the spirit. True worship must be intelligent. Plainly we cannot worship God farther than we know him. This is indicated in the context, in which Christ says to the Samaritans, with implied censure, "Ye know not what ye worship." True worship must also be affectionate and from the heart. God makes himself known to us as a Father, and he asks of us a filial temper, that is, the exercise of love and obedience towards him. But knowledge, love, obedience, which comprise the whole of religion, are acts of the spirit, and of that alone.

On this point I need not dwell. Every man knows that any external expression without the corresponding internal feeling, is only hypocrisy and mockery. How obvious then that a spiritual and rational creature can honor God only by knowing, loving, obeying, and adoring him; and that no form, or ceremony, or rite, or offering can be acceptable, except as it expresses the state of the spirit. Hence, as we might expect, if the Scriptures are from God, we every where hear them saying, "My son, give me thy heart." "To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, is more than whole burnt offering." "They that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The second characteristic of acceptable worship as stated in the text is, that it should be "in truth." Truth is supposed by some to be contrasted here with the ceremonial forms of the Jews; but as the idea of sincerity is certainly included in that of truth, and as the worship of God in spirit is quite as naturally contrasted with those forms, I regard this as the more probable and important meaning. "God requireth truth in the inward parts." The importance of sincerity is so great, religion is so liable to be, and has been so much perverted to purposes of interest and ambition, that we might reasonably expect that this characteristic would be singled out by our Savior. Entire sincerity—the worship of God for its own sake from motives of duty and affection—from the perception of his glorious character and of our relations to him—this is the great privilege of man, the highest act in which he can engage, and without this no worship can be acceptable. Other things connected with true worship there may be, but this *must* be. "They that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth."

Having thus stated what spiritual worship would *in*clude, I observe that it would *ex*clude, and radically destroy every species of superstition. Superstition is one in its principle; but as opposed to spiritual religion it shows itself chiefly as the superstition of place; or of forms; or of priestly intervention; or of the substitution of offerings and bodily sufferings for moral qualities.

But that place cannot be important to spiritual worship is directly asserted in the context, and the supposition that it might be so, is that species of superstition that called forth the text from our Savior. The idea that God might be worshipped in some places more acceptably than in others, has been among the most common forms of superstition, and was almost universally prevalent at that day. Men think of God as such an one as themselves. They do not easily conceive of him as infinite in his presence. They have, moreover, sacred associations with certain places. Hence the shrines and pilgrimages of all ages, not simply for taking advantage of that principle of our nature by which, when we visit the place where interesting scenes have occurred, our conceptions and feelings become more vivid and intense, but because it has been supposed that God was really more present there, and more readily propitiated, and that there was something of merit and holiness attained by visiting such places. But the doctrine of the text sweeps away at once every idea of this kind. God is now known as filling heaven and earth, and as having his eye open, and his ear attent upon every place where worship goes up from humble and penitent hearts.

Nor, I will just say, does this give any countenance to those who withdraw themselves from church on the ground that they can worship God as well at home. Possibly they can, and better. But they cannot worship him there *publicly* and *socially*, nor hear the word of God dispensed by the living preacher; and it is because public and social worship, and the preaching of the gospel, are divine institutions, that men are bound to go to church, and not because the worship of an individual, considered simply and by itself, can be better performed there.

And what is thus true of place, is equally true of forms. All thinking and candid men agree now that no form can be in itself of any value; and also, that when spiritual and true worship is really offered, it is equally acceptable to God, whatever the form may be.

I observe, also, that the worship now spoken of excludes all idea of worship by proxy; all intervention of any man, of any priest, of any church and its officers between the soul and God. It makes religion an individual, personal thing. It brings every man directly to God. Even Christ himself, as mediator, does not, as some seem to suppose, stand between the soul and God. He came to open a way through which we might come to God by him, and all that he has done will avail us nothing unless we ourselves come to God in that way. When will men learn that the fundamental idea of heaven is not that of an es-

tate that can be purchased, or of a place to which they can be carried, but of a state of moral union with God, and of conformity to him! This is, perhaps, the most subtle and dangerous form of superstition of the present day. To say nothing of the papist, who so often does as he is bid, and then transfers the care of his salvation to the priest and the church, there are many protestants who think of *a* church, and especially of what they imagine to be *the* church, as possessed of some mysterious efficacy, and as able to afford them a security entirely beyond that which they would derive from their immediate relation to God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The principle of what has just been said, applies so directly to the superstition of substituting offerings and bodily sufferings for moral qualities, that I need not dwell upon that.

Thus the simple words of the text, received by the church, would sweep away at once every form and vestige of superstition, and all hypocrisy. *Superstition* and *hypocrisy*—these have always been the great sources of corruption to the church. They always have come in, and they always will, just in proportion as spiritual worship declines; and it is only by promoting spiritual worship that they can be excluded.

And this leads me to inquire, as was proposed in the second place, how it is that spiritual worship may be best promoted. This is an important inquiry to us, because it is this worship that we, my brethren, as ministers of the gospel, are set apart to promote. It is important too, at the present time, because many seem to be departing from the simplicity of the gospel; and the spirit of form, in opposition to a spirit of faith and of power, seems to be gaining ground. Even in New England, there are not wanting indications that the great principles of the Reformation, will have to be re-asserted and re-vindicated.

The answer to this question must be drawn either from the Bible or from the constitution of man. But these conspire in teaching us, that the worship of God in spirit and in truth, can be promoted only by presenting to the mind the character of God as a spiritual and holy being, as a Father, a Redeemer and Sanctifier, in such affecting lights as to call forth suitable emotions, and a right course of moral action towards him. All truly religious emotion must be called forth in view of some manifestation of the character of God, and it is only as that is presented directly or mediately, that any thing can be done to improve the religious character, or to promote acceptable worship. This is our great principle. Nature is religious only as it manifests God. The seat of religion is in the moral and religious nature of man; and as these are quickened by manifestations of the character of God, and are trained to act rightly towards God and duty, a pure and spiritual worship will not fail to be rendered.

But here the question arises, Are we required by the Bible, or by

the nature of man, to address these faculties alone? May not other faculties and principles of our nature be cultivated in connection with these, not merely incidentally, as many of them must be, but systematically? Here we find the fundamental philosophical question, in the solution of which there is so wide a difference among different sects. We shall touch upon the chief points, both of difference and agreement, if we consider, as I now propose to do, 1st, Whether true religion may not be promoted by addressing the senses and the imagination by means of forms and ceremonies; or 2d, by an appeal to the imagination and to taste through the fine arts; or, 3d, by an appeal to the principle of association; or, 4th, to the social principle and to the affections.

May true religion, then, be promoted by addressing the senses and the imagination by means of forms and ceremonies? And here the first question evidently is, Does God prescribe for us, under the gospel, any forms? And if so, for what purpose? On these points there is little difference of opinion. No pretence can be set up that there is any form of worship prescribed in the New Testament, nor do I know that it is pretended by any sect that there is. The disciples met for worship and prayed; but nothing is said of any order of exercises, or of any ceremonies, or of any uniform attitude. The sacraments were indeed instituted; but the chief object of these was not to promote worship. Their objects are, 1st, to constitute a visible church and to form a bond of union to its members, and 2d, to convey instruction and to affect the heart through the senses, by a language intelligible to all men. But as if to guard even these against abuse, the simplest possible actions were adopted, and nothing is said of the time, or form, or mode in which they were ordinarily administered.

But admitting that no form is prescribed in the New Testament, may not the church adopt certain forms, which, according to the constitution of human nature will promote true devotion? Has not man a body as well as a soul, and in his present imperfect state may not such forms be important helps?

Concerning this, I observe, that if any form could have been devised that would, on the whole, have been so adapted to human nature as to promote true worship, it would not have been omitted in the New Testament. I distrust altogether any compassion for the weakness of man, and any skill in overcoming it, that goes beyond those manifested by God. I know there are those who say that these things are nothing in themselves, but that in the present state of human nature and of intelligence among the people, they are necessary to attract attention and to keep alive a suitable reverence in their minds. For themselves they do not need them, but they are necessary for the people. But what is the state of intellectual and spiritual manhood for the race? Let us know this, and this whole question is settled. Is it one in which forms are abolished, and in which man worships his

Creator in simplicity, in spirit and in truth? If it is, then the proper mode of leading him to this is not through forms. For, let forms be once introduced, and we might certainly know that they would be retained by selfishness and the love of power on the one hand, and by habit and association on the other; and thus either hold the race in perpetual childhood and imbecility, or greatly embarrass and retard its growth. If the young bird is to fly, let it be thrown into the atmosphere. If man is to worship God in spirit and in truth, he must not be encumbered with forms.

And what we might thus anticipate, all history shows has taken place. By means of forms and ceremonies, the mind has, 1st, been drawn from God; and, 2d, it has rested in them, so that they have been substituted for a Savior and for holiness of heart. Thus it is in the church of Rome. By her forms she does the two greatest possible evils to true religion. She corrupts the simple and spiritual worship of God, and she substitutes a false ground of hope to man. These two are intimately connected; for it will be found that whenever works are relied on as the ground of salvation, they most often consist in the observance of those forms by which the simplicity of worship is marred and corrupted. These evils have always resulted from forms and probably always will. They cling, to some extent, around those that are simplest; and the danger is increased in proportion as forms are increased and rendered more imposing. The simple worship of God in spirit and in truth, in opposition to all superstition and hypocrisy; and justification by faith alone, in opposition to all priestly interposition and ceremonies of the church, and penances, and meritorious works, are the two great points for which we are now to contend. These have always been inscribed upon the true banner of the church of God. Over our churches that banner still waves. Let us gather around it. Let us abide steadfastly by it, if need be, even unto death.

We now proceed to inquire, whether the pure and spiritual worship of God may not be promoted by addressing the imagination and the taste through the fine arts. Do not these blend with the movements of the religious nature, and become as the wings of devotion to raise the soul nearer heaven? No doubt here is one great secret of the power of the Romish church over the minds of her people. She has intimately associated all the fine arts with religion, so that while she has her forms and superstitions for the many, she has made the church, independently of religion, an agreeable place of resort for the refined. Men love excitement; there is a pleasure connected with emotion of almost every kind; but in the emotions awakened by the fine arts there is a high luxury. Let then these emotions be connected with the awe thrown around religion, and especially let them be made to soothe the conscience as a religious duty, and it is easy to see how strong the attraction they may constitute. But all this pleasure

and emotion may arise in those who are entirely corrupt and worldly in their lives, or who are even infidel in their sentiments. What men wish to avoid, is a holy God, a perception of his moral government, and of their obligations and accountability to him. They wish to have their fears and their consciences quieted by something like religion, and they are willing and pleased to have all those emotions of awe, and sublimity, and admiration awakened, which arise in view of the natural attributes of God in distinction from those that are moral, or better still, to have excited by the fine arts, under the name of religion, emotions kindred to these.

In the present moral state of the world there will be something of this wherever the progress in wealth and refinement is considerable. For what can a man do who is cultivated, and lives in refined and fashionable circles, and who would keep upon good terms with himself and with the church or with the religious world, and who yet cannot submit to bring his conscience and his whole moral being into subjection to God? How can such a man spend his Sabbaths? Will he be satisfied to go to a plain house of worship and simply listen to devout prayers and to the truth? No. He will either take a walk, or a ride, or a sail, and talk of seeing God in his works—a God that, as he sees him in those works, has no moral law and does not speak to his conscience; or he will go to a church where there is architecture, and music, and it may be painting and sculpture, and where it is well if there be not a preacher whose preaching chimes in and harmonizes with all this. The same general tendencies which lead the hearer to seek gratification from the fine arts, will lead the preacher to cultivate elegant literature, and to become a general scholar and a fine writer, rather than a man of prayer and mighty in the Scriptures.

Would you then, it may be asked, exclude the imagination and the class of emotions now referred to from divine worship? I answer, *No.* But I would have them called forth by the attributes, and by the present or the remembered works of God, rather than by the works of man. If I cannot worship in the broad temple of God's works; if I cannot, like the Saviour, pray upon a mountain, where, it may be, the starry heavens are above me and the breathing stillness of nature is around me, or where, it may be, the voice of the tempest is in the top of the great oak by which I kneel, and its roar is among the hills, while the lightning writes the name of God on the sky and the thunder speaks of his majesty; if I cannot stand by the sea-shore and hear the bass of nature's great anthem, yet let no poor work of man come between me and the remembered emotions which such scenes excite in the hour of my worship before the great and holy God, whose hand made all these things. "Where is the house that ye build for me?" says God, "and where is the place of my rest?" "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." Far rather would I find in the simplicity of the place of worship a confession of its inadequacy to lead the mind up to God, than to find any beauty of

architecture, or any gorgeousness of decoration that would lead me to admire the work of man, and draw the mind from God.

Here, however, God has left man at liberty; and much is to be allowed for the influence of education, and constitutional peculiarity, and early associations and impressions. I have no sympathy with that state of mind which would prevent worship in a cathedral. God is there. But I would have it forgotten that it is a cathedral, and remembered that *God is* there. I would so magnify God, and bring his spiritual presence so near, that those things should be indifferent, and that in the cathedral, as well as in the plain church, or under the open heaven, men should equally worship God in spirit and in truth. There is, however, great danger that the excitement of what is poetical and imaginative in man by architecture and music,* considered simply as music, and painting, and statuary, should be substituted and mistaken for the pure and holy worship of God.

On this point the simplicity of Puritanism has been regarded as austere. But so has the true worship of God always been regarded by the many. While therefore we find in our Bibles, and in the works of God, the motives and the media of worship, while we are willing and desirous that the fine arts should have their appropriate temples and be cultivated as they ought to be among a refined people, we yet remember that even under the old dispensation, the acceptable worship went up from an altar of unhewn stone; and we think it best accords with the spirit of the New Testament, and is shown by history to be safest, and is most conducive to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, that a chaste simplicity should characterise all the structures and all the forms of our religion. We think that the appropriate object of religious services is to cultivate the moral and religious nature, and that there should be no attempt to produce an effect upon the mind by forms, or to blend the emotions appropriate to the fine arts with those higher emotions that belong to the worship of God.

Perhaps our Puritan ancestors carried their feelings on these points too far; but we think it can be shown from the nature of things, and from the developments of the times, that they were substantially right, *and we abide in their faith.* I would rather have joined in one prayer with the simple pastor and his persecuted flock among the glens and fastnesses of the rocks in the highlands of Scotland; I would rather have heard one song of praise rise and float upon those free breezes in the day when the watch was set, and the bloody trooper was abroad, set on by those who worshipped in cathedrals; I would rather have kneeled upon the beach with the company of the Mayflower when persecution was driving them into the wilderness, than to have listened to all the rituals and Te Deums in every cathedral in Europe.

* On no account would I say any thing to discourage the universal and high cultivation of sacred music. This differs from the other fine arts, because its appropriate office is not impression but expression. Where it is regarded and admired for its own sake, it obstructs instead of promoting the worship of God.

We next inquire whether we may not take advantage of the principle of association to aid devotion, and especially of that well known fact that our ideas of things invisible become more vivid and affecting, and permanent, when they are associated with sensible objects. Has not our Savior himself taken advantage of this principle in instituting the sacraments? and may we not follow his example and carry out the same principle in other things? Will not a cross, erected or represented in the church, remind us of our Savior's sufferings? Will not consecrated water at the door, remind us of our need of purification? Will not incense ascending, give us an affecting sense of the efficacy of prayer? Will not a relic of some ancient saint, remind us of his virtues and lead us to imitate them? May we not usefully set apart, as they did under the old dispensation, a particular form of vestment in which the ministers of religion shall officiate, and which shall be associated in the minds of the people only with the solemn services of religion? May we not, in these, and in many more ways, employ this principle to aid true devotion?

It is not surprising that this should have been attempted. Probably it has been done in most instances from good motives, but the result has shown that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." It might have seemed to the wisdom of man that to have the body of their great prophet buried among them, and a monument erected over it, would remind the ancient Israelites of their deliverance from Egypt, and of the law he gave. But God buried him where no man knoweth of his sepulchre till this day. He left no relic or vestige of him to be a source of superstition in other days. This shows his estimate of the principle, and the results where this has been attempted are such as to make us feel, that though it may be sometimes innocent, it is always dangerous, and to lead us to observe only those forms which the Savior instituted as necessary to the visibility of his church. When we see, at this day, a whole city moved because a bone of a good man, who died some one thousand four hundred years ago, is, or is supposed to be found; and when we see the dignitaries of a church performing over it ceremonies and carrying it in pompous procession; and when we see the same people burning Bibles and persecuting those who would enlighten the people, we feel that we cannot be too careful how we take the first step towards a degeneracy and a perversion of the gospel so awful.

The question is not whether the principle of association shall operate in connection with religion. It will and must do so in connection with the visibility of the church in any form, and around that church associations the most tender, and hallowed, and enduring, will cluster. But it is whether we are to adopt the principle and act upon it as a system. No doubt it gives the church a strong hold upon the people. It enables her to fix a stamp early and firmly on the minds of the young; but that stamp is the mark of the beast, and not the seal of the Spirit. It is one great instrument by which the systems of heathen superstition are sustained and riveted. It always has led to su-

perstition, and it always will. Paul said, "though I have known Christ Jesus after the flesh, yet now henceforth know I him no more." The religion of Christ is a moral and a spiritual system, and all attempts to associate its great truths with sensible objects, will bring the mind down to them, instead of carrying it up to those truths.

But, my brethren, if there are these dangers connected with the introduction of forms and of the fine arts, and of the principle of association, neither is our simple mode of worship without its dangers. The danger on the one side is of formality and superstition; on the other, of indifference and want of reverence. This is often painfully evident in our congregations to the neglect of what may be called expressive forms, and the natural language of the emotions. God has so connected the mind with the body, that to every emotion there is a natural form of expression; and that the emotions connected with worship should not be expressed by some appropriate external sign, is both unseemly, and tends to destroy the emotion itself. In many of our congregations we are pained to notice during worship an entire want of uniformity of posture and of the appearance of devotion.

Another danger is, that worship, appropriately so called, will lose its proper relative place. We meet in public for the purpose of social worship, and of instruction, and every thing done may be said to consist of worship and of the sermon. In ancient times, the great thing was the worship. When the gospel was preached, instruction evidently became much more prominent, but still worship is the highest employment. The object of knowledge is to lead to intelligent worship. I care not how high a place the sermon may hold absolutely, I would honor the preaching of the gospel as the great means appointed by God for saving men, but relatively the sermon should be subordinate to the worship. But without being formally stated, it has been practically felt, that in the simplicity of our worship, more must be done in the sermon to make the house of God attractive; and hence it is undoubtedly true, that the power of preaching has been more cultivated, and the relative position of the sermon has been higher with us than with most other denominations. Perhaps this must be so to some extent.

The sermon is the proper place for an address, not only directly to the understanding and heart, but also incidentally to the taste and the imagination; and while the irreligious man cannot be expected to join in the worship of God, he may be gratified and instructed by the sermon, and it would seem a matter of course that it should form the chief attraction for him. It is not of this that I complain, but that ministers themselves, and religious people, too often think more of the sermon than of the other parts of divine service, and that there is among us a want of the proper cultivation of the feeling of reverence and of devotion in the worship of God. The house of God is not a mere place for preaching. This I am persuaded it is in the power of

the pastors to remedy, not by neglecting their sermons, but by cultivating in *themselves* the spirit of devotion, and by proper instruction of the people.

But if we may not appeal to the people through forms, or the fine arts, or the principle of association, except incidentally, there is yet one principle to which we may appeal in sustaining religion, and one too, the power of which needs to be more fully brought forth in these latter days—I mean, the social principle and the affections. "Behold," said the heathen, in the early days of Christianity, "how these Christians love one another." When genuine love exists in a community towards a common object, and towards each other, there will be no difficulty in bringing them together, and in making them efficient in action. Mightier far is this—love to the Savior, love to their pastor, love to each other, love to a world perishing around them, than taste, or imagination, or associations connected with any outward form. In this alone will the true ground of the efficiency of any church be found. Having this, they will meet together and sustain the institutions of religion, and labor, and pray, and give; and having not this, there will be the form of godliness without the power thereof.

It is one excellence of our religion, and an evidence of its divinity, that it not only regards man as related to God in his individual capacity, but that it takes into view his social nature, and fits him to be the member of a perfect community. Hence the social principle in all its forms, from the slightest manifestation of natural affection and neighborly kindness up to the peculiar love which Christians bear each other, ought to be cultivated in the church, and to be associated with the worship and the institutions of religion. If the social principle could have free power in religion—if restraints and formalities could be broken away, and soul could commune with soul, with the same freedom on this as upon other subjects, I feel that one great barrier would be removed, and that the waters of salvation would flow more freely through all the channels of society. And the church is an institution admirably adapted to facilitate this. The proper idea of a church, is that of a body of men associated together for the purpose of aiding each other in mutual edification—that they may be more fully conformed to the Savior, and may better serve God, and build up his kingdom in the world.

But how is it now? When a man joins a church, does he feel that it is to be the means of cultivating his social nature? Does he feel and find that he is associated with a band of brethren who regard his best interests, and watch over them? Does he feel that he has entered into an association where his affections are to be called forth, and his energies are to be enlisted as in a school of mutual improvement, and for the purpose of doing good? How is it with the meetings of the church? Is any thing done for mutual improvement or social culture? Is there a free expression of feeling? Or are they cold and formal?

My brethren, I put these questions, not knowing how these things may be in your churches, but with the conviction that the power of the church, as a social institution, is little known, and that one of its great energies is slumbering. This is a point to which I would gladly call the attention of this body, because I think it vital to the interests of the church. Are church members sufficiently aware of their relative duties? In the pursuit of gain—in the contests of ambition—in the demands of fashion—perhaps sometimes in the calls of benevolent societies, are not the claims of the church and of the members of Christ's body neglected? May not the pastor do more in making it felt that he is not simply a preacher, but a *pastor*, a leader of the church in spiritual activity, earnestly engaged in promoting the cause of Christ in every way, and that they are to co-operate with him?

May not Sabbath Schools, and Bible Classes, and social meetings be instituted—let any man read the life of Baxter and he will see that they may—so as to engage the affections and associations of the young, and to call forth the zeal and activity of all? May not all be made to feel that they have something more to do in sustaining the cause of religion than simply to attend meeting? Let a church have its affections and its activity thus, or in any other way excited, and let them feel that their pastor is truly a pastor and a leader, and that they are co-operating with him, and they will go to the house of God, not to be entertained, but to worship him, and will be glad to hear, in connection with his institutions, a plain sermon. They will seek to honor God's institutions, to learn their duty, and will cease to send their thoughts, with the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth in search of great men. Then should we see, not simply individual Christians in their closets, but whole churches unitedly, socially, worshipping God in spirit and in truth. I do believe that the spirit of activity, and of Christian affection, and of devotion, may be so cultivated that there shall be fewer itching ears, and fewer disastrous changes in the ministry.

From the subject, as thus presented, I remark, 1st, That we see what it is that God values and seeks for as his holy eye looks down upon the multitude of costly churches in Christendom, and upon the crowds that weekly assemble in them. It is upon the spiritual worshipper alone, however humble and neglected by the crowd, that he looks with complacency.

I remark, 2d, That the labors of those who would promote spiritual worship must be great. This must be so in any form in which a church and its worship can be constituted, because it implies an opposition to the whole force of human corruption, and to that desire to get to heaven without holiness of heart, which is the very essence of popery and paganism and formality. But emphatically must this be so with us, as so much of the interest of the worship must depend upon the pastor.

Very different is it in most other denominations. In the papal church the forms are every where the same, and one man can go through them as well as another. The preaching is relatively nothing. In the Episcopal church the prayers are composed by the church, and much of the duty of a clergyman consists in going through with a prescribed form. In the Methodist church the system of itinerancy prevents the necessity of mental labor for more than four or five years. No so in the Congregational churches. In them the whole responsibility, both of the worship and of the sermon, comes upon the pastor, and he must appear from year to year before the same intelligent and thinking people. This is a burden which the Spirit of God, in connection with the prayers of the church, can enable a man adequately to sustain, and nothing else can. Into such a ministry, few will enter that they may enjoy literary leisure; and though some may do it, as we doubt not they do, from sincere conviction, yet we do not wonder that the ambitious, the lovers of ease and pleasure, and those in whom the imagination preponderates, should go out from among us. But if our labors are arduous, or our sacrifices great, they are not such as were those of our great Master and of his Apostles. In their footsteps we think we follow. To them we look for an example.

We claim for ourselves whatever there is that is venerable in an antiquity higher than that of the papal church. We are grieved and astonished at the forms and ceremonies and pomps and mummeries and priestly domination that has assumed to be the religion of him who was meek and lowly—who went about doing good—who had not where to lay his head—who taught men to worship God in spirit and in truth. We would be of his spirit. We would teach men every where the great lessons that he taught; if it should be necessary in that mighty struggle, the foretokenings of which he must be blind who does not see, we would pray for strength to yield ourselves to the baptism with which he was baptized.

And this leads me to remark, finally, that those who would promote the spiritual and true worship of God, should themselves be spiritual and holy men. This is the one thing needful in the ministry of any church or under any form. This we would embrace in the arms of our affection wherever we find it. This can irradiate and beautify, as the sunlight the evening cloud, any form not contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and without this, all forms, even our own, will become but as the material upon which a false religion will be enthroned to the terror and corruption, or on which it will be gibbeted, for the mockery of mankind. But let there be a faithful, humble, holy ministry, and the word, and worship, and ordinances of God will be honored. From them there will go out an influence such as can go from them alone, that will be felt for good in every interest and in every relation of society. God will set his seal upon their labors. Not

more certain is the promise of seed time and harvest than that that sow in tears shall reap in joy." There will be joy in heave repenting sinners. There will be joy on earth, because "Zio arise and shine, her light being come;" and there will be joy the chief Shepherd shall appear, and such pastors shall go up their flocks to stand before him. Amen.

SERMON CCCLVIII.

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"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—1 Peter, v. 5.

Every well ordered society has its laws of intercourse. In polite society these laws, or usages, go under the general name of etiquette and custom. The intercourse of neighbors, as such, is regulated by such proprieties as are understood to pertain to good neighborhood. More particular societies, such as deliberative assemblies, corporations, and the like, have their more specific regulations. There could be no society—no agreeable intercourse between individuals, as social beings, without such laws. Barbarism itself finds them necessary.

These social laws are not always reduced to writing; nor are they susceptible of it. Nor are they in all respects exactly defined. But their existence and propriety are understood, and generally respected. Every one, at least, who pretends to good manners, is supposed to recognize them, and to know their general limits, and about where, if not always exactly where, they are transgressed.

Now a *Christian church* is a society; and is eminently social in its design and constitution. No human society, the family excepted, is supposed to involve a greater intimacy among its members. It therefore needs its social laws,—needs them eminently. And it has them. They are laid down in the Scriptures, and particularly in the New Testament, with as much distinctness as the case admits of. They do not undertake to define and make palpable the exact bounds and lines of religious social propriety; they leave much to the good sense and good will of the members, as all society does. But they give some

specific precepts; and for the rest, they point out the great and sential principles of propriety, by which they expect us always tc governed.

These principles are *modesty* and *benevolence;* which are ind the basis of all true politeness. These two qualities, though they r not ensure a graceful or *accomplished* manner, are sufficient to gu the minds that are properly imbued with them from whatever is r and offensive. A truly kind and modest person seldom offends aga refined politeness in social life; nor does a truly humble and nevolent member of the church offend against the propriety wl ought to characterise the intercourse of that society.

These laws, pertaining to the religious and social intercourse Christians, are partly written in the text. *Likewise ye younger s mit yourselves to the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to a ther; and be clothed with humility.* Others, scattered through Scriptures, are such as follow. *Be courteous. Be kindly affectio one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring one anot Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* These, with ot similar precepts, taken together, form an admirable social code.

Let us give our attention, now, to the particular precepts wl are contained in our text. Some care is necessary to ascertain meaning of the language. *Likewise ye younger submit yourselve the elder.* The terms *elder* and *younger* are relative. Primarily t refer to comparative *ages.* They are also used in the Scripture reference to *place* and *station.* Those who occupy official station the church, as teachers and rulers, are called seniors, or elders; w those who are the subjects of their teaching or oversight, are ca juniors.

It being the order of nature that the older should teach and gi the younger, the terms naturally come to be applied to those v stand in such relations to each other, without regard to age. I s pose the apostle has respect to *both* these senses. Let the taught subject to their teachers, the governed to their guides and overse and let the younger in years be subject to those that are more adv ced in life.

Yea all of you be subject one to another. Ye younger be subjec the elder. But what is the *submission* or *subjection* he intends ? means a proper *deference* to others, according to the relations betw us and them. Members of the church should show a proper res to their pastors—a proper and becoming deference to their of their authority, and their teaching. The younger members sho show a becoming respect to those older than themselves in years piety—a becoming deference to their wisdom and experience, an all those claims which are naturally conceded to superior age. one another the members should show the respect which is due fellow members—each showing modesty and kindness towards persons, opinions, feelings, and rights of the others. In a word, th

should be nothing of arrogance, conceit, disrespect, or self-will in the intercourse of Christians; but every one should exhibit the amiable demeanor of one who properly appreciates and respects the relations of parties.

Omitting other relations which are concerned in the text, I will discuss only those of the members towards each other, and those of the younger towards the older.

I. We will consider the demeanor which is expected in the members *towards each other. Yea, all of you be subject one to another.*

By being subject one to another, it is meant, as I have remarked, that they should mutually and properly respect each other's feelings, judgments, and rights. It is not meant that no one should have an opinion of his own; nor that he should not express it. This is not desirable. Nor does the apostle mean to forbid that *special* respect shall be paid to peculiar worth. If a member be a person of more than ordinary intelligence and piety, he is of course to be respected and esteemed accordingly. There is nothing of a *levelling* character in our text, nor is there in the gospel. Quite the contrary. The gospel does indeed place all men, in some respects, on a level; but it also acknowledges comparative moral worth, and commands respect to be paid wherever it is due, whether in the church or out;—tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

It were preposterous to say that a Hale, or an Evarts, or a Wilberforce, should have no more respect or influence in the church than the weakest member in it. And yet this is what too many, professing religion, are willing enough to claim. Is it not a fact that some make it a ground of preference for joining one church rather than another, that in *that* communion they are *all upon a level;* and no one is expected to esteem any other more wise, or competent, or pious than himself? They seem to regard the church of Christ as a sort of platform, which places all persons and all things upon an equal footing—where ignorance and knowledge, youth and age, office and private station, and male and female, shall have a common currency, and receive a like consideration!

But our text, while it inculcates entire modesty and respect on the part of all, and supposes even the highest worth to be slow to assert its claims, (as indeed it will,) contemplates no *such* state of things as I have described. Let every one have, and freely express, the sentiments he honestly entertains, and assert his rights, if necessary; but at the same time, let him show always a becoming deference, and charity, and good will, towards the sentiments and wishes of his brethren, and especially towards the church as a body.

It will not be necessary that I should be more particular as to the apostle's meaning. But let us now consider what *arguments* there are for such a demeanor as he requires.

And first, such deportment is amiable and proper in itself. It is in

keeping with the spirit of the gospel, the leading traits of which are humility, gentleness, and love. And it goes far to recommend religion to the world; while a different demeanor goes far, and very far, to *discredit* religion. Where should we expect to find the finest exhibition of the true courtesies of life, if not among those whose hearts and minds are supposed to be imbued with the lovely spirit of the gospel? Must we go to the vain and fashionable world to find better manners than are cultivated in the church? And shall Chesterfield be a more successful teacher on this subject than Jesus and his apostles? You will not understand me, by this allusion, as asking for the church the embellishments of fashionable life: I only plead for the substance and reality of that genuine urbanity of which the world affects the forms.

II. That the members shall be subject one to another, as the apostle directs, is essential to the *harmony* of the church. We all have human feelings; we have human infirmities and passions, and are liable to many errors; and it requires much mutual respect, concession, and forbearance, to live agreeably in any human society. Where these virtues are wanting, in the church, the family, or elsewhere, there will be more or less unpleasant feeling. If one or more members set up for superior wisdom, and insist, however honestly, on having things their own way, showing no deference to the judgment, or the wishes, or the piety of others, disgust and discord are likely to ensue. Or even if a *majority*, acting upon the theory that the majority shall always govern, shows no respect to the feelings, or judgment of the minority, the harmony of the church is endangered, if not sacrificed.

The majority ought indeed to determine questions; and the minority, however large, ought cheerfully to submit; but, at the same time, the minority, however small, has its right to be heard and treated with respect. And there are cases where the major party ought, as a matter of courtesy and good feeling, (I do not say of right,) to give way to the minority.

It may be better to sacrifice a measure, even of some importance in the view of the majority, than to sacrifice good feeling,—however unreasonable it may be in the minority to require it. And where conscience is not invaded, and among honest people, it almost always *is* unreasonable in a minority to expect it. Let the few yield to the many; this is the only principle upon which communities can act. But let all parties act in the spirit of our text. How many bitter animosities, and disgraceful schisms would be saved by such a spirit pervading all concerned!

III. Conformity to this precept is essential to the wholesome *action* of the church. Cases may occur, in which the few are wiser than the many; or even a single individual may be right, and all the rest in error. But I do not believe that this is *generally*, or *frequently* the

fact—especially after consultation. The presumption always is, that the collected wisdom of the many is better than the opinion of the few. And there is Scripture for this belief. *In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.* And this proverb of the wise man is confirmed by much experience.

It has very generally been seen that where the few have had their way, the many following against their judgment, the issue has been evil. The proper way is, for each one to give, with modesty, his own views and reasons, and hear respectfully the views of others; and then acquiesce in the judgment of the majority. If he cannot yield his *convictions* in the matter, he can, at least, refrain from wounded pride and active opposition. This is amiable and modest, and it certainly is *reasonable.* For if it be hard for *one* to conform himself to the judgment of the many, it is still harder that the *many* should submit themselves to one.

IV. I will only add on this head, and as a fourth argument for conformity to this precept, that it is promotive of the best virtues in individual members. It is an admirable means of self-discipline. Brought as we are, in the church, into an intimate, and responsible, and active, fellowship with a variety of persons, of different ages, capacities, tempers, and degrees of information, we have occasion for the constant exercise of charity, respect, patience, condescension, and especially, *humility*, the loveliest of all the virtues; dispositions which are not native in us, and which require exercise to keep them in existence, and *much* exercise to bring them to perfection.

There is too much reason to confess that pride, self-sufficiency, and a spirit of dictation, and uncharitableness, sometimes, in individual cases, grow more rapidly in the church than in almost any other society. In the humble and familiar brotherhood of Christians, if any be disposed to be officious, opinionative, and intolerant, proud, heady, high-minded, and such as Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence, they have an opportunity to do so. But this is the fault of the individuals, and of human nature, and not of the institution. No society is so fitted as the church, if its laws be conformed to, for the cultivation of the opposites of these unamiable dispositions; in proof of which such precepts as my text, and many bright examples may be adduced.

And it should be observed here, that the Apostle in giving us this precept signifies to us that *humility* is essential to its performance. 'Be subject one to another, and *be clothed with humility.*' Be humble, that you may be subject. Paul signifies the same. 'Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but *in lowliness of mind*, let each esteem other better than themselves.' And James speaks in a similar manner, 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge,' &c. iii. 13. Our Savior also taught the same virtue of humility by a significant action, washing the disciples' feet. We must cultivate humility and meekness then as a prerequisite to the fulfilment of this pre-

cept. And what does *observation* teach us on this subject? If we look through the church, in all ages, what are the manifestations with regard to this virtue, which those make who are least subject to their brethren? It is not the most humble and self-distrusting, nor the most wise, nor the most consistent, that find the most difficulty to act harmoniously and pleasantly with their fellow members. *Zeal* they may have, and honesty, and efficiency; but they are wanting in *humility*.

And in this connection let us turn our thoughts for a moment to that impressive consideration in which the Apostle *enforces* what he says, and which forms a part of our text. Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, he says; *for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* What a check should such a thought as this be to pride; and to all such behavior as has its source in pride! And when we find ourselves disposed to differ with our brethren, and especially with the majority of them, and are strenuous to have our own views prevail, our own schemes adopted, our own wills or wishes gratified, let us inquire with ourselves how far our conduct proceeds from this unlovely and too often unperceived disposition, pride. How many are there who know not what spirit they are of,—who, while they flatter themselves that they are doing God service, and receiving his approbation, are really hateful in his sight!

But I must turn now to a brief consideration of that other relation of which the text speaks—that of *the younger towards the elder.* My design was to make this my principal topic; but I have not allowed myself the necessary time. This however is not perhaps to be regretted, as the same arguments which have been used in reference to the mutual deportment of brethren generally, are easily transferable to this branch of our subject. And they apply here in superior force. If mutual respect and deference be amiable and proper among equals, it is still more becoming in the younger to show respect and deference to the older. And if in *that* particular, the church ought to be an example to the world, much more ought it to be in *this.* Where should the children and youth of the community be pointed to examples of respect paid to the wisdom and gravity of years, if not in Christian families and in the church?

And again, as it regards the *wholesome action* of the church, it is very important that the younger should submit themselves to the elder. I am the more concerned to make this remark, and to give some prominence to it, because I apprehend that the fashion of the times requires it. It is not the practice of the present age as it once was, especially in the early days of New-England, for the young to show a marked respect to their seniors. That precept of nature and the Scriptures, 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man,' is gone, there is cause to fear, or fast going, into disuse. The fact in regard to families, and in regard to the community generally, is commonly spoken of and acknowledged. The same impropriety exists in religious societies. Our religious arrangements are made with a special, and sometimes almost exclusive reference to the views

and wishes of the young. Thus, e. g., if a minister is to be settled, the inquiry is, not who will be the most judicious, sound, instructive preacher; but who will be most pleasing to the young. And so in other matters, which might be specified.

Now I do by no means object to regard being had, as far as may be wise, to that portion of our congregations. They are the hope of the church, and all hopeful means ought to be used to interest them in the business of religion. But I do not think it expedient that they should have the *leading* influence, either directly or indirectly in religious affairs, rather than the older members of the church. And I give these following reasons.

1. The inherent, natural propriety of the thing,—upon which I will not dwell.

2. The best interests of the cause of Christ require it. The older members—older in years, and older in the church—are better qualified to judge of doctrines and measures than those who are younger and more recent. It were indeed a pity if they were not—if they have been long in the school of Christ, and gained no wisdom by it, they have read the Bible more; have prayed, conversed, and reflected more; have learned more of the human heart; have seen more revivals, and had longer opportunity to judge of measures and results. Experience and observation, and the word and Spirit of God, have 'taught them the way of God more perfectly' than they once understood it; and I appeal to all experienced Christians whether they have not seen cause as they have grown older, to change and modify their views in regard to many things. And if this be so, is it not safer for religion that their counsels should shape affairs, rather than the unripe counsels of the young?

Let me be answered *this:* Whether Christians that have been long converted, and in the church, are not wiser in religion than they themselves were when they were new in religion? And if they are, whether it is not presumable that they are wiser than those who *now* are young, and new in religion, as they once were? And, admitting this, does it not hence follow that this acquired wisdom of theirs, should be available to the church? But how can it, if the young are not to submit themselves to the elder? And let us refer the matter to the Head of the church himself, and gather his will upon the subject. He has expressed his will in the text, and in numerous other scriptures; and it is inferable from the nature of the case. To say that older Christians shall not have the paramount direction of measures, under Christ, is in effect to say, that Christ's own teaching, so far as regards the usefulness of his disciples, shall amount to nothing. To what purpose is it that he has been long training his more advanced disciples? He has been teaching and disciplining them through a course of years, by his word, by his Spirit, and by his providence, and causing them to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of himself; and can it be agreeable to him that all this training, all this profiting in them, shall be of no utility to his cause? But how can it be ser-

viceable, if these experienced disciples are to resign the direction of affairs to those who are but novices in religion? Is this, I say, the mind of Christ? And does he choose that his great cause on earth shall be even in the condition of Rehoboam among his counsellors; who rejected the wisdom of the old men, and preferred that of the young.?

3. I believe that the young themselves, would, in the end, be best satisfied and most happy in the church. They would feel a truer respect for it, and would be more humble and teachable.

Finally: how well would it be, both for the public interests of religion, and for the private satisfaction and improvement of the parties, if all concerned would behave agreeably to the spirit of the precept before us! If respect were never wanting towards the aged; nor condescension to the young; nor charity towards equals;—if humility and love pervaded the fraternity; and if the *pastoral relation* shared also in these holy dispositions, neither of the parties to it forgetting what is due in that relation to the other, what a happy exhibition of the social virtues would the church make!—and how impressive to the world!

I have discussed this text, because it is a divine precept, very solemnly enforced, and belonging to a class of precepts which I believe it to be the duty sometimes, if not frequently, to exhibit from the pulpit. I have discussed it with a general reference to the community at large, and not because there was any special call for it here. If it have any applicability to this particular community, I hope it may have some effect to correct the evil to which it has respect: if there be *no* present occasion for it here, it may still be well that it has been before us, as it may serve to forestall evils which, here, as well as elsewhere, are incident to churches; being the offspring of human nature.

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SERMON CCCLIX.

DELIVERED IN ROCHESTER, N. Y. SEPTEMBER 12, 1843, BEFORE THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,*

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PROGRESS, THE LAW OF THE MISSIONARY WORK.

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."—Philippians iii. 13.

When this service, by another's relinquishing it, was unexpectedly devolved on me, I too should most gladly have declined it, on account of the imperfect state of my health, had there been any one to whom I was at liberty to transfer it. And there was another reason which might well have led me to shrink from the duty of this hour, were it not that providential calls are designed for those to whom they come. I regard the present occasion as of very great sacredness, and as imposing on me one of the gravest responsibilities of my life. The representatives of three thousand churches are assembled to consult together upon the work of giving the gospel to the world. They have appointed me to speak to them in the name of Christ, concerning the business of their meeting: surely I may ask without disparaging myself or any other person, who is sufficient for the just performance of such an office! It calls for so unusual an unction from above, for so peculiar and uncommon a baptism of the Holy Spirit, not to mention other high qualifications, that I suppose no one living, duly aware of its demands, could undertake it without fear and trembling.

When I began to cast about my thought to find an appropriate subject of discourse, this Missionary Institution presented itself before

*The author was the alternate of the Rev. Dr. Tyler of the East Windsor Theological Institute.

me in two aspects. At first I beheld it as having already a vast and most weighty charge on its hands: eighty-six stations among the distant heathen, with five hundred laborers; sixty-two churches with twenty-three thousand members; and more than six hundred schools with twenty-seven thousand pupils; besides numerous printing establishments, with their founderies and presses for the use of the missions: a trust demanding so large a measure of liberality and of devoted and patient care, and being in itself of so unrestrainable a tendency to growth, that the fear would obtrude itself, of its becoming a burden which would not be long endured, without retrenchment and reduction. And this apprehension was strengthened by the monthly returns of deficiency to meet the expenses, which, until lately, was becoming larger and larger; and also by the following remarks in the last Annual Report: "While the heathen world never presented such openings as now for missionary labors, there are all over christendom indications as if the work would not be conducted on a much broader scale, without a new impulse from on high." "We are now only where it was needful we should have been four years ago." "This great and favored community has been virtually at a stand for a series of years in the work of Foreign Missions:" and there was yet further confirmation to this forboding, in certain intimations here and there given, that the Board has advanced about as far as it is expedient it should go in this work. These things almost seemed decisive in favor of my making a discourse against retrogression—of undertaking to demonstrate that the apprehension adverted to is groundless; that no station need be surrendered, no missionary recalled, no church left in its infancy, as sheep in the wilderness, without a shepherd; no school dissolved; no pupil dismissed: that the business of the Society is in no danger of becoming unmanageable; that this noble work of modern evangelism need not commence so soon a backward movement. In this decision, however, I could not rest; for while I mused, this association assumed another appearance. I regarded it as sustaining other relations and responsibilities. It appeared in my view as a company of the followers of Christ, banded together by his command and his spirit, and also by mutual covenants and pledges to attempt the Evangelization of the world. Instantly, the large and numerous missionary associations already existing, with the extreme difficulty of sustaining them, passed fromnotice. They could no longer be thought of. For now the whole earth, with its corruption, guilt, and ruin presented itself as the field of action, and the perfect occupation of it with Christian churches and institutions was the labor to be done—the burden to be borne. To this enterprise, in its world-wide extent, and with its demand for resources existing only in God, every member of this Board stood committed, by virtue of his holy calling, so that it had been a violation of their Christian compact to disavow the accomplishment of this, as what they distinctly designed, and what they assuredly expected, along with others, and with help from God, to be instrumental in achieving.

With this apprehension of their character and undertaking, such a strain of address as the first view suggested, could have no reconcilement. It was dismissed at once, and instead thereof, the point which it seemed most needful for me to enlarge upon before my Fathers and Brethren of this sacred association, was that they go forward with their undertaking, on the principle which governed the Apostle in his personal religion; namely, that of forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. Accordingly I determined to speak to you with whatever measure of grace and strength God might give me, ON THE REASONS FOR PROGRESS IN THE MISSIONARY WORK—THE WORK OF EVANGELIZING THE WORLD.

I. A great and fundamental reason lies in the very nature of Christianity. In the Christian scheme the following facts are essential:—that mankind are in a state of sin, and dying in this state are utterly lost; that their recovery can be effected only by their being christianized, or brought under the power of the gospel; that the gospel can do nothing where it has not been propagated or is unknown; that Christian Missions are the necessary means of its propagation, and that under the Divine blessing, these means are adequate, and their end certain. These facts which are, we may say, the groundwork of missions, their plea, their justification, their praise, are also an argument which no one can answer, for their most thorough and vigorous prosecution. They make an appeal to the hearts of Christians, which if it was justly responded to, would at once constitute the universal church a missionary society, and would keep missions advancing with increasing speed and power, until no man would be left beneath the wide vault of heaven without the knowledge of the gospel. These great primary truths of Christianity render all degrees of missionary apathy in the church her unspeakable dishonor and reproach, implying unparalleled hardness of heart, if not downright insincerity in her confession of Christ. We propound it, therefore, as a matter self-evident and unquestionable, that Chrsstianity should either be renounced as an imposture, or else be propagated through the world with all possible diligence; that there is no middle way, which reason does not instantly repudiate, between denying the gospel altogether and going forward with the work of spreading it among the nations of the earth, until the universal human race is brought under its influence.

II. The next reason is that the great Missionary Commandment has not passed away. The charge of Christ to his first disciples was meant for us who are here this day, as absolutely and perfectly as it was for them. If our Divine Lord were at this meeting in bodily presence, and standing up visibly before us, should address to us the words, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"

we should be under no obligation to obey him which is not now upon us. The proof of this is whatever demonstrates that Christianity was meant to be a permanent institute. The command to christianize mankind is a part of Christianity, as much so as the law of brotherly love, or the ordinance requiring the celebration of the death of Christ. To submit to the gospel is to make this command a rule of conduct. It is in the Christian's code, and why is he not as firmly bound by it, as by the precept, "Let brotherly love continue;" or by any other statute which the gospel enjoins? Indeed there is proof special and peculiar that this command was not given to the first disciples, except as including their successors. This proof exists in the annexed promise of our Lord, that he himself would be with them through successive generations till the end of the world, a promise which admitted of no fulfilment, and was unintelligible, on the supposition that the first disciples alone were in his intention.

Now why is not this a reason for advancing in the missionary work, which with every Christian should be as determinative and controlling as the forces which keep the orbs of heaven in their eternal circuit round the sun. It surely should have had this influence on the first christians, and why on them only? We cannot all be foreign missionaries; but we all can either go, or send, or aid in sending others; and what we are now solemnly insisting upon is, that whatever can be done herein, by every member of the church, is required to be done, under the sanction of law, by the Almighty Sovereign himself. It is our testimony, in the name of Christ, that no disciple of his is left at liberty in this matter; that he is bound by his oath of allegiance; that necessity is laid upon him; that he may no more cease from doing what he can in the work of missions than from his daily prayers, or from revering the name of Christ, or believing in him as the Savior of the world.

III. It should be a motive to increased progress that hitherto, almost from the beginning, the Missionary Law has been, in respect of actual observance by the church, so nearly as an obsolete and dead letter. It has not been expunged but with exceptions, serving only to render the general fact more astonishing, it has had no exemplification as a part of commanded and scriptural piety. It has not been so with the other laws of Christianity. Imperfectly as they have been kept, not one of them has by the general and allowed and unlamented disregard of the church, been deposed from their rank and authority as laws, binding on the conscience under the sanction of Divine majesty and power. No; this has been the peculiar fate of the one command to evangelize the world. The first disciples were almost impatient to obey this command; they were for a time laid under a restraint. As soon as that restraint was removed they devoted themselves and their substance to the propagation of Christianity, and their subsequent life was in unbroken harmony with this noble beginning. They ceased not to look upon their Mas-

ter's last great charge as embodying his sovereign will, and his eternal majesty. They never consulted together as to whether it was expedient to undertake to fulfil it. They never inquired whether its fulfilment was practicable, but implicitly bowed before it, as revealing the pleasure, and pledging the supporting grace of their Lord. But how few have, in this respect, imitated these loyal disciples? During all the following centuries the church at large lay almost as in the sleep of death, as to a sense of obligation to carry the message of redeeming love to the nations of the world. Individuals there were, great and singular spirits, who felt themselves bound by this precept. At different times also, organized exertions were made, more or less extensively, to spread nominal Christianity in some countries; but let the page of history be turned to, which records of the general church at any period after the first, the merging of her will into that of her King and Head, in regard to this one matter of christianizing mankind, or any just acknowledgment of his prerogative as Lawgiver and Ruler herein. It might be edifying, if there were time, to give the evidence on this point, directly and at length, from the annals of Christian Missions, so called. But the fact is no less certain than the church's continued existence. Never, since the primitive era, has she given indication that she felt herself under the sanction of any authority to evangelize the nations of the earth, while by twenty millions a-year, during eighteen centuries, they have been passing to their eternal destiny, strangers to the influence of God's recovering grace. And shall not the faithlessness of so many ages, with the countless and endless enormities which it has entailed, admonish us not to pause quite yet in our begun career of evangelism, but rather do what in us lies to retrieve the past by augmented haste in our movements?

IV. We should think only of quickening our progress, when we consider how slow has been our course since we began, and what little advance we have made. When for the time, now about half a century, the energies of the whole church should have been enlisted on the largest scale of operation, and the work nearly or quite done, O how partial and languid have been our movements! We have done but little beyond launching forth in this enterprise: we have hardly spread our sails to the wind.

Slow and inconsiderable, however, as has been our advance, compared to what it should have been, we would not speak disparagingly of that which has been done. The difference in itself, is not small, between the present and forty years ago, in regard to Missionary operations. It deserves our fervent thanksgivings, that evangelism—not worldly policy and martial power, under the cloak of religion, aiming chiefly at temporal aggrandisement and nominal submission—but the pure and primitive missionary spirit, seeking simply to save the souls of men,—is now employing 1500 missionaries at 1200 central stations, assisted by 5000 native and other salaried agents, at an

expense of two and a half millions of dollars a year.* The missions of the Protestant Church, in its various branches, during the last forty or fifty years, are doubtless more considerable, in their direct and indirect relations to the worlds' salvation, than those of the foregoing ten or fifteen centuries. It is only, however, a contrast with the past that excites our joy. When we look again upon the vast field of human shame and woe that lies outspread in every direction, to the remotest bounds of the earth, and think of our obligations and privileges, and of the church's thousand years sleep over the very concern of her existence, no feelings seem appropriate but those of astonishment and grief, that the scale of our missionary proceedings should be so small. If we compare it with that of our Home operations, inadequate as that is, the inequality appears enormous. What the Protestant Church gives for the evangelization of the world is less than a tenth—yea, if we do not misreckon, than the fifth of a tenth of what she expends on herself. Out of her 80,000 ministers, but 1500 are foreign missionaries. Without determining precisely the proportion of resources which should be employed abroad, the following considerations throw light enough on this subject to stir the whole church to her centre, with the spirit of reform: First, that she is not more under law to care for her own well-being, than she is to evangelize the world. Secondly, that the unevangelised portion of mankind is at least five times as large as the other portion; and thirdly, that in propagating Christianity, the Apostle's rule should be followed as essentially equitable and Christian, "To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand." We do not undertake to give with precision the results of a just application of these facts, but we do affirm with heaviness and sorrow of heart, that it is not charitable—no, it is neither merciful nor just on the part of the church, that of a race all equally and infinitely needing the gospel, and equally entitled to it by the grace and commandment of God, they should allow one-fifth the privilege of hearing the joyful sound all their life-time, while the rest, through sixty generations, should be left in total ignorance of the fact that a Savior has visited the world. There is in this inequality a guilt which should fill the church with the profoundest grief.—It tramples upon the great foundation law of God's empire: it makes void the Almighty Redeemer's last and most imperative charge; it shows indifference to his honor; and what wonder, that while the consequence to the world has been its continued and progressive ruin, the church should have been enduring an incessant struggle for existence, and should be compelled to acknowledge the survival of her exposures and conflicts as the greatest of wonders.

But the whole truth has not been told. It is not the disproportionate allotment of the Church's actual expenditures and ministry, that

* These statistics are from Dr. Harris, who appears to have taken much care to make them correct.

measures her indebtedness. She would be incalculably at fault, if of these, she divided to the Heathen all that would fall to them. For these collectively are immensely deficient. Then would she be found as a faithful steward in this matter, if the expenditures for all purposes were as generous, and the ministry as able and as large, as the interest and honor of Christ demand; and further, if her private members were all duly engaged in the work of human salvation; and if now the Heathen should have their full share: here is the standard by which the Church should judge herself, as to her arrears to the world. Who can estimate the amount? Shall we discharge it, shall we not be adding to it incalculably and continually, if we not do proceed upon a broader scale of operations than that with which we have been heretofore content?

V. The tokens of the Divine complacency in the missions of these times are most inspiriting motives to progress in them. These are embraced, in the condition in which the Church has been advancing since our missions began, in the success of these missions, and in the signs of the times as promising greater success.

1. From the time we began our missionary work, the state of our churches has, on the whole, been one of progressive prosperity. The entrance on that work was the dawn of a good day which has been growing brighter and brighter, and which, if we falter not in our undertaking, will, doubtless, continue to shine more and more, until its light shall become seven fold, as the light of seven days. This favorable and advancing change is the result of no hidden instrumentality; but, manifestly, of the blessing of God on the missionary undertaking. This movement originated other kindred and subservient ones, as the necessary means of its accomplishment, and while all have been conspiring together to forward the general design, they have been as life to the dead to those who have been under their influence. The connection of good agencies here is easily traced. The resolution being once seriously taken to give mankind the gospel, the necessity was soon felt for the translation and diffusion of the scriptures, for the increase and improvement of the ministry, for the multiplication and distribution of religious books; and as its accomplishment advanced, particular evils called for their own means of reform: and while the vast foreign sphere opened more and more to view, with all its crying demands for the gospel, the conviction became deeper and deeper as to the necessity of giving increased attention to the interests of Home, the source, under God, of supplies to the Heathen. In the mean time every thing tended to impart a sense of dependence on God, and to cherish the spirit of prayer, for the effusion of the Divine influence. The result was, that a system of benevolent agencies arose, which has distinguished the age above all that have preceded it, since the primitive triumphs of Christianity.

Various incidental benefits have followed. Christians of different

sects meeting often together for prayer and consultation, in reference to plans and measures connected with the cause of human salvation, have, under the power of that paramount and common object, forgotten their party names and interests; and thus the evils of sectarianism have been gradually disappearing, and Christian union advancing; insomuch, that the time seems rapidly approaching when denominational peculiarities among the evangelical sects, will be indeed, but as the differences among members of the same family, or regiments of the same loyal and united army.—Again, there has been a remarkable revival of Biblical study and learning, as it might have been expected there would be, when the enterprise was undertaken, of publishing the scriptures, in the various languages of the earth. There has also been an improvement in the science of theology, the result of its being pursued under practical influences, and in its relations to practical effect. In the same way the general pulpit has been improved; and, likewise, by regular consequence the general piety of the Church. And to crown all, outpourings of the Holy Spirit have been granted in increasing power, and also with increasing frequency, until revivals of religion, scarcely inferior to those of the apostolic period, have become especially in our land, ordinary and every day occurrences, to which scoffers and gainsayers, have almost become weary of making opposition.

It is difficult to appreciate the change which has taken place. There is, we know, a great difference of impression in regard to it. That there are some things in it to be deplored, perhaps no one will deny. But viewing it in all its aspects, it appears to us, both in itself and especially in its promise, entitled to our grateful and adoring admiration. We doubt if any one has an adequate sense of its importance, or can have, until the existing state of things shall become historical and be surveyed as lying in the past, connected with antecedent times and with the just results of its own influences and events. If by pausing in the work of missions we should ultimately throw the Church back to where she was before, then would it be seen, whether an advance had been made or not. Who can think we should not sustain a mighty and irreparable loss, and deserve for our inconstancy the indignation of God and man.

2. But we note the Divine pleasure in our work in the success which has attended it, as well as in the prosperity of the Church. Our success is disparaged by comparing it with that of the primitive days; but this comparison should not be made without also comparing the primitive times and the present, in regard both to their respective measures of the missionary spirit, and to their means and facilities of evangelization. If in Christ's first little flock, there was a greater amount of the proper kind of power than can now be collected out of the one hundred and fifty millions of Protestant christendom, why should it be thought that our success will bear no proportion to theirs, unless its absolute quantity be equal? What if among the early disci-

ples, the proportion of those having the missionary spirit, were as it is in our churches; and, what if these few had possessed no more of that spirit than the generality of the modern friends of missions; then, had their scale of labors been nearer to ours: and would they have so far transcended us in success? If the Church now were made up of missionaries, devoted in life and substance to the spread of the gospel, then might we wonder if there was much more tardiness in the work of evangelization under our agency, than there was under that of the first Christians? But when it is considered, that out of eighty thousand Protestant ministers, only fifteen hundred are employed in foreign missions, and that of these, there is not, perhaps, one Brainerd, not to say a Paul in the spirit of evangelism; and also that while among the private members of the first Church, no man said "ought that he had, was his own," among us, there is almost no man who does not practically say just the reverse; giving for the spread of the gospel, out of his abundance, and living as self-indulgently as though he gave nothing; when it is kept in mind that such is our comparative measure of the missionary spirit, notwithstanding that this is termed a missionary age, must not the intelligent and sound conclusion be, that the disproportion in our success, is not that so little, but that so much, beyond all ground of anticipation has resulted from our missions?

But account, we said, should also be taken of the difference of means and advantages. The first propagators of the gospel had a supernatural use of speech and other miraculous powers, which almost superceded the necessity of preparative and indirect modes of influence. They were perfectly equipt for preaching wherever they went, without the study of tongues and without scientific research and arrangement. Our circumstances are widely different. All forms of miraculous agency are now unknown. We have surprising inventions of science and art, and other great natural powers, but these do not qualify our foreign missionaries, for going to work among the Heathen, as our domestic ones can do, among their own countrymen. They have multifarious labors to perform, which could have had no place among the primitive Christians. They are required by the great difference of their means and circumstances (who can think otherwise?) to give themselves to the study of languages, the translation of the scriptures, the reducing of barbarous tongues to writing, the gathering and teaching primary and other schools, the preparing of books, the providing, in short, a complete apparatus for introducing and perpetuating a state of Christian civilization; and thus, laying such foundations for permanence and growth in the churches, planted by them, as could not have been laid in the apostolic days. It may be that they have not occupied themselves as much in preaching, as Paul and Barnabus in their circumstances would have done. But we do not forget that other great and arduous works have been on their hands, which they have well discharged; and that they were bound to pursue on the whole, as they have nobly done, a system of operations, demanding for the production of its results, much time and

patience. And now, if no such sudden and overwhelming success come at once, as that which followed Apostolic ministrations, shall we yield ourselves to the paralizing influence of disappointment?

The actual measure of our success has not been small. It has far transcended our expectations. What early friend of the cause was sanguine enough to hope, that there would be at this day, one hundred and eighty thousand converts from Heathenism in Christian communion, and two hundred thousand heathen minds under training in Christian schools;* or that such scenes of Divine grace as these at the Sandwich Islands, would be so soon realized; that the greatest revivals scarcely excepting those of the Apostolic period, and the largest churches in the world, would be there: that of those, but as yesterday most barbarous people, a larger proportion would be spiritual christians, than of the inhabitants of any other portion of Christendom of equal extent; and that civilized life on firm supports would be rapidly advancing among them to maturity! The missions in the South Sea Islands, after wrestling hard, like Jacob, against great seeming discouragements, have had results not less surprisingly prosperous. "From that time to this," says their martyr Williams, "one rapid series of successes has attended our labors, so that island after island, and group after group, have in rapid succession, been brought under the influence of the gospel; so much so, indeed, that at the present time, we do not know of any group, or any single island of importance, within two thousand miles of Tahiti, in any direction, to which the glad tidings of salvation have not been conveyed." But our success is not limited by the number of our converts, or the size and prosperity of our churches and schools, or by our progress in the work of civilization, or by the extent to which the gospel message has been published. If in the Apostolic times, nations had offered themselves to be taken under Christian training, if the praises of evangelization had been pronounced in those days, by bodies of scientific and learned men, on account of its influence on the civil, political, commercial, and literary interests of mankind, and if public sentiment almost throughout the civilized world, had changed from scorn or pity into earnest and warm approbation, would not these facts have been counted amongst the proofs and the items of Apostolic success? But by facts such as these, doth the Providence of God, most benignly and graciously smile on the missions in which we are engaged. Surely if any persons have been waiting for success to move them to take part with us, they need wait no longer.

We have had to encounter afflictions. Lives of the hightest promise have been sacrificed; and some of our plans have been thwarted; but there were such things in the days of Christ and his Apostles, and we have no cause to regard them in any other light than as trials of our faith. Our only real discouragement has been the great difficulty of meeting the demands for the church's liberality, arising from the unlooked for, and wonderful prosperity of our missions.

* See Great Commission, p. 190.

3. But it is not only by smiling on our churches and missions, that God hath expressed his high delight in our work, but likewise by his Providential agency in arranging and ordering things in the state of the world. If any one has doubt on this point, he must, we think, be of an unspiritual or uninformed mind. The signs of the times, the condition and circumstances in which the world has been placed, and in which it has been continued, have been, from the commencement of the work such as to invite and allure us on to its most diligent prosecution. How has the world been and how is it yet standing before us, in those relations which most concern us as engaged in its evangelization? If we survey it in a religious point of view,—of the three comprehensive divisions to which it may be reduced, the Brahminic, the Mahometan, and the Christian,—the two former present themselves, as enfeebled, decrepid, inaggressive, decaying, ready and almost willing to perish; while the latter after the conflicts of eighteen hundred years, hath renewed its vigor, and is bearing down upon the others, with triumphant force.—If we look at it in its political circumstances, where do we behold the ascendency of strength, greatness, and empire, but in those nations, which are the seats of our missionary associations, and the sources of the piety, liberality and self-sacrificing zeal by which the work is carried on? If we contemplate it, in regard of the trade, the arts, the intellect, the literature, the enterprise, the wealth, the happiness of the people, still the advantages, in a pre-eminent degree, are with those portions of it, which in more senses than one, may be termed the missionary countries of the globe. And then, what does it mean, that for the last eight and twenty years, the great powers of the earth have remained in so profound a peace among themselves, and that where hostilities have had place, they have been so uniformly overruled for the advancement of our design? This form of encouragement we may remark has been almost constantly cumulative. If the last year, the heathen world presented openings for missionary labor, which it had never done before, the openings this year are wider, more numerous, and more attractive. Since our last annual meeting, the great and insurmountable wall of China, has fallen; and thus hath been thrown open at once, by a gracious and high-working Providence, which should flood the universal church with joy, a new and almost boundless field of missions—a world in itself—containing nearly four hundred millions of people, before regarded as almost inaccessible, by any other than miraculous power. And how signal and deserving of lofty praise, have been the recent interpositions and steps of the Divine power, with reference to the preservation and establishment of peace between the nations embracing our Missionary Boards! When we consider the disastrous influence of a war between those nations, especially on the work of evangelization, the eminent peril to which peace was exposed, and the very remarkable measures and arrangements both in this country and in England, by which the peril was removed and the bands of peace ren-

dered stronger than before; can we avoid recognizing with thankful and rejoicing hearts, the Hand of God displayed to show us the profound interest which He takes in our enterprise, and to encourage us to go on with it, to the uttermost of our ability?

In short, we are bold to say without the least hesitation, that if ever the light of the Divine countenance was lifted up upon any human undertaking, it is shining at this moment, in the fulness of its expanding, vitalizing and cheering influence on the missionary work in which English and American Christians are engaged. By his blessing on our churches, and on our missions, and by his providential disposals and movements among mankind, God so discovers his great pleasure in this work, that he might well upbraid us, with utter indifference to his favor if we are not stedfast, immoveable and always abounding, in the use of every appropriate means of its advancement.

VI. The sixth motive to progress is the ground we have to hope that the future advances of the Gospel, are to be exceedingly more rapid than the past. We can only touch upon a topic, on which we should rejoice to enlarge. The destined dominion of Christianity is universal. Its first victories however glorious, will have no glory, comparatively, amid the splendors of those, which it is yet to achieve. All nations are to be evangelized; the world is to be renewed; Heathenism, Mahometanism, all false systems are to pass away; the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and the knowledge of God and his truth is to cover the earth, as the waters cover the seas. And it is in the highest degree probable, if not wholly beyond doubt, that the time for effecting this mighty triumph is short. If it were to commence immediately, nay, if it have already commenced, as it probably has done, its course must be incomparably swift in order to reach its termination within the longest period, to which by the general belief of the church it can be extended. The conviction seems warranted and demanded not only by the sound interpretation of the prophecies, but by the entire panorama of Providence, that the promised predominence of the Gospel, is almost at the doors. The long duration of the limited and depressed condition of the church; the world's ripeness and readiness for a change; the facilities for an almost winged intercourse with the most distant parts, making in effect one end of the earth neighbor of another; the ubiquity of British and American influence; and the rapid extension of the English language and literature through Europe and Asia; the honors paid to the work of evangelization by the most enlightened persons and societies; the unlimited plans and enterprises of christian philanthrophy; and above all the vast increase of the spirit of prayer; have conduced to the wide spread impression among the more spiritual part of the church, that the future march of Christianity to universal empire, will be more like an already victorious army hastening to the spoil, than, as it hath heretofore been, like one slowly, laboriously, and painfully, making its way over alpine

heights, to the field where the decisive battle remains to be fought and won.

It is freely admitted that we see not in operation, any sufficient causes for the production of the great result. But our reliance is not limited to natural or visible agencies. The work of evangelism is a work of faith. We look for sudden and surprising interventions of the Divine power, to render favorable influences effectual, and to overrule unfavorable ones. We do this under warrant both of scripture, and the analogy of the past. And we do it with the more confidence, when we consider the influence of prayer on the mind of God. That influence hath been accumulating, day and night, through all the ages of the past; but in our times, as it hath been very eloquently said, "a chain of prayer beginning in the farthest east, is carried round with the sun to the farthest west, in the islands of the Pacific, through all the hours of time." When we remember this, are we presumptuous in the hope, that as the patience of God bears long with the wicked until they have perfectly filled their measure of iniquity, and then gives free place to the full visitations of his reluctant wrath, so, after God hath kept his elect crying to him incessantly from the beginning, and hath in our day so mightily augmented their number and their importunity, he will at length vouchsafe, as in a moment of time, such unparalleled and immeasureable effusions of his Spirit, as will make the remaining course of the Gospel, almost like the lightning which lighteneth out of one part under heaven and shineth unto the other part under heaven.

But let it be observed, that we are pressing this high hope as a motive to missionary zeal. If God is about to work swiftly and mightily for the peaceful extension of his kngdom, his people will be set to working for this purpose, also swiftly and mightily. It is only in and through their agency that God exerteth his own. If he stretch forth his hand as in the beginning, the church will be quickened, and moved, and engaged, as she was at first. She will again feel, as it has well been said, the presence of her invisible King and eternal Lord; the souls of christians will again overflow with the plenitude of spiritual and heavenly life; and they will again cease to value earthly existence, and be willing to sacrifice it in the struggle against the powers of darkness. For as the church is the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, when she makes no revelation of saving power, none will be made. We are looking therefore for a change in the church, of which the anticipated change in the state of mankind, shall be but the just result and full development. Indeed the latter change will be nothing other than the former, extended by the process of assimilation, even as the leaven by the same process leaveneth the mass in which it hath been hidden. So that as Paul told his shipwrecked fellow voyagers to whom he had promised safety in the name of the Lord, that unless the shipmen abode in the ship, they could not be saved, may it be said to the church, with all the pledges and promises of the world's conversion before her, that the

world will not be converted, unless she stir up herself, to the requisite and appropriate exertions for its recovery. And further, as Christ said concerning Judas, 'The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed,' may we not say to the Christians of this generation, that although the world will be evangelized according to the sure word of God, yet woe unto them, if with all their advantages and encouragements for going forward in the work of missions, they falter in that work, ere its end is fully reached.

VII. A seventh reason for advancement therefore exists in the fact, that there is no guaranty against the consequences of our halting. No prophecies, no signs, no facilities and preparations, no vivid anticipations of the latter glory as about to break forth like the lightning's flash, can shut the door against these consequences. The eternal principles of the Divine government, the perfections of the Divine Nature, require that door to remain open. Close it, and the penalty of the highest disobedience, the displays of God's punitive displeasure against aggravated sin, and of course the Divine benevolence will disappear: for no evil can be compared to the relaxation of the bonds of the Divine empire. Let us then glance at the consequences of not advancing. We shall not remain long at a stand, when we have once decided against progress. Well did our report of last year declare, that it is the law of Heaven, that in the christian race, we should press onward, never content with present attainments, present doings, present sacrifices. There is the certainty of decline, in ceasing to be aggressive and onward. That halt is virtually a backward step, and it may prove to be an irrecoverable fall. It shews inherent instability and weakness, and it inspires distrust and discouragement. It has been justly and very seasonably remarked,* that the souls of men are not likely to be stirred to support adequately a work, even in its present state, unless it give signs of continued advancement. If we come to a stand, it will not be long before the churches will begin to abate their interest, their prayers, their confidence, their support. The results hasten—one after another, our missionary operations come to an end, our schools are dispersed, our missionaries recalled, our stations abandoned, and at length our holy enterprise given over as impracticable, or to be accomplished in other days and by other hands. And then, how much better had it been for the cause of evangelization if the idea of modern missions had never been conceived. At what immense disadvantages will the christians of a future day enter on the work. And how will antichrist, whom our successes have enlisted in active opposition, glory over us and the cause, while occupying our deserted positions, and either numbering our churches as his own, or persecuting them to death, or scattering them again among the heathen.—And by what strange and terrible judgments upon our domestic

* By the Rev. Dr. Williams of New-York.

churches, may we expect to be visited. How long will our revivals and annual jubilees of benevolence reman, when the spirit of missions has departed? What else were to be anticipated, but that a general and unparalleled blight would overspread the fair heritage of God, and that all forms of error and corruption would infest it, until it became a scene of utter desolation? And with such appalling degeneracy in the church, what would be the state of civil society? Unless the loudest admonitions both of Scripture and of history be as empty noise, there will be commotions, revolutions, tribulations; signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Fathers and brethren, it is truly an awful responsibility which we and our cotemporary fellow christians, are under. O, with what interest does Heaven look down upon this anniversary meeting. Methinks the holy angels, would fain appear amongst us, if that might be, to animate us in our work. Nor are the powers of darkness less interested in this occasion. In such circumstances were it not easier, to give up our self-indulgences, our possessions, our lives, than to entertain for one moment, the thought of standing still in this work? Were not those then alarming words, which were cited near the beginning of this discourse, as it were out of our own mouths: "This great and favored community has been virtually at a stand for a series of years in the work of Foreign Missions." Should we not tremble at this fact as portending danger, and announce it again and again with still deepening awe on our minds, and continue the announcement, until our breath fail us, or until the danger is seen, and if possible averted by a new onward movement. May it not be that we ourselves are not deeply enough impressed with the reality and fearfulness of the danger? May their not be a lurking presumption in our minds that the tree in this case will not be suffered to yield its fruits; that there will be some interference with the stated connexion and sequence of things; that the Divine purposes and the prophecies cannot otherwise be fulfilled; that the great providential preparations and arrangements of the times, will otherwise be without an end? Let us not be taken in this snare. If such a presumption would induce security in our minds, let us resist it, by recalling the dreadful facts of history, which show how unsafe is such a reliance, by remembering that the relation of cause and effect is surer than our pre-sentiments respecting the unfulfilled counsels of God, or our interpretation of prophecy and signs; and by considering the temerity and guilt of so limiting the Holy One, as to make him incapable of accomplishing his purposes except by violating the order of nature and the laws of his government. The acceptable year of the Lord has, not seldom been also, the day of the vengeance of our God. If the time is at hand for giving Christianity the empire of the world, judgments may also be at hand, to do in the way of wrath and destruction, that which might have been done in the joyful and glorious way

of converting and saving grace, by the due prosecution of the work of propagating the Gospel.

VIII. The last reason which we shall urge for going on with this work as vigorously and expeditiously as possible, is, that this is demanded in order to meet contrary movements occasioned by the missionary proceedings of these times. The great adversary hath not been an indifferent observer of these proceedings. His plan of opposition has begun to reveal itself. It has had a four-fold developement. A philosophical atheism is displaying itself amongst us, in seductive and audacious forms. Rationalism, professing no unfriendly purpose against Christianity, while renouncing its divinity, its peculiar claims to inspiration, and its miracles, is laboring to undermine its deep foundations. Anti-protestantism has sprung up in a new and dishonorable shape, and in the midst of protestant churches and institutions, and by persons holding membership in them, is freely reproaching the great leaders and martyrs of the reformation as schismatics, and the reformation itself as a deplorable event; and though it avows no intention of enthroning over us the man of sin himself, is contending for the enormous delusions and heresies of his system, and making justification by faith, as held forth by Luther with such overwhelming force against the empire of darkness, as the chief and first-born of errors, worse than heathenism itself.* And finally, papal propagandism with its well-planned and well-sustained missions, is resolutely disputing the day with us, both at home and abroad, employing against us, its jesuitical calumnies and deceits, its lying wonders and miracles, its imposing pomp of ceremonies, its ample treasures wherever they can be availably applied, and ready and waiting should there be occasion and ability, to renew its deadly anathamas and persecutions. The powers of darkness were never more disturbed since the death of Christ; never more profoundly moved with hostile feelings and designs against the Lord and his Anointed. There are indications not a few, of the coming on of a spiritual conflict among men, such as the world has not hitherto seen; perhaps, as some confidently think, the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is to christians the

* "Whether any heresy has ever infested the Church so hateful and unchristian, as this doctrine—the Lutheran doctrine of Justification—it is perhaps, not necessary to determine: none certainly, has ever prevailed so subtle and so extensively poisonous. It is not only that it denies some one essential doctrine of the gospel, (as e. g. inherent righteousness); this all heresies do: it is not only that it corrupts ALL sound christian doctrine, nay, the principle of orthodoxy itself; though this also it certainly does; but its inroads extend farther than this; AS FAR AS ITS FORMAL STATEMENTS ARE CONCERNED, it poisons at the very root, not Christianity only, but natural religion. That obedience to the will of God, with whatever sacrifice of self, is the one thing needful; that sin is the one only danger to be dreaded, the only evil to be avoided; these great truths are the very foundation of natural religion: and inasmuch as this modern system denies these to be ESSENTIAL and NECESSARY truths, we must plainly express our conviction, that a religious heathen, were he REALLY to accept the doctrine which Lutheran LANGUAGE expresses, so far from making any advance, would sustain a heavy loss, in exchanging fundamental truth for fundamental error."—British Critic, for October, 1842, pp. 390, 391,

most momentous problem that ever claimed their attention, what should be their plan of action in these eventful times. The problem is not difficult of solution; the path of wisdom is plain. Two things are certain: First, that if we suffer ourselves to be hindered in our missionary work, by any means whatever, the enemy will obtain his purpose, his plan will succeed. He will not be much disconcerted, though we attack and put to rout one after another, or all at once, the hosts he hath arrayed against us at home, if he can but divert us from our foreign campaign. It was our entrance on that which originated his newly displayed wiles. His great trouble is that we have undertaken in the name of Christ to evangelize the world. His plan has for its main purpose, the putting an end to this work. All our domestic annoyances are intended to effect this result. Success here will pacify and content him. Even his defeats he will count for victories if they contribute in any way to oppose the missionary enterprise.—The second certainty is, that the most effectual way of overcoming the adversary within our domestic and neighborhood precincts, is vigorous and ceaseless and insatiable aggression on his great foreign dominions.—Let us achieve large and brilliant victories there; let us go forth from conquering to conquer among the unevangelized nations of the earth; and we shall be full of life and strength and victory and peace within all our borders; and our home antagonists will be down-hearted and discouraged, and will soon give way before us, having enough to do unless they repent, to bear their own confusion; while we sing our psalms of praise at the spreading triumphs of the kingdom of Christ.

The enemy's own example may be adverted to for our instruction. When he found himself so deplorably at fault at the reformation, in his papal kingdom, his scheme for raising up that kingdom again, and giving it honor in the eyes of men, was by the society of the Jesuits to give it enlargement among his heathen territories; a scheme wisely laid, most faithfully prosecuted, and crowned with astonishing success. It is lawful for us to learn from him. Long enough has the church been kept out of her just sovereignty over the world by suffering herself to be embroiled, through the artifice of Satan, in intestine controversies and border conflicts. Let her at last escape from this infatuation. If she must contend at home, let her do this, remembering that in so far as this contention shall interfere with the work of evangelization, it is, as to the main purpose for which she has earthly existence, the adversary's triumph, and her own defeat and overthrow. Gain what she may in particular victories, her gain is the loss of the world; her petty victories she takes in exchange for the empire of the universe. Let the conquest of the globe, then, be the object of her great ambition, her stedfast and eager pursuit. Especially let it be so now, since it was her recent undertaking of this which has placed her into her present circumstances of overwhelming interest. These strange manifestations, these surprising and astonishing movements against evangelical religion all the world over, these signs of an approaching crisis in the destiny of the human race, what

are they but the appropriate evolutions of an infernal system of resistance to that work of evangelization in which we are engaged? Are the gates of hell at the extremity of their zeal and wisdom to put a stop to that work? and is this the time for us to think of desisting from it? Whatever of Christian manhood there is in us, is revolted at the suggestion. The hour of decision is at hand. The victory at home and in all the earth is ours, if the sacramental host do but prove themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ in the foreign warfare.

We have endeavored to plead earnestly for progress in the missionary work. OBJECTIONS have not been adverted to; and we have almost doubted, if in this case they should be noticed. Objections, however gravely and forcibly adduced, are sometimes to be disregarded in proportion to their probability of prevailing. It was a law in Israel that if a man, however venerable by character or office, should undertake to show that idolatry was not wrong, so far from being listened to for a moment, he was to be put to death, even though he should give a sign or wonder against stedfastness in God's service, and the sign or wonder should come to pass.* If there were temporal penalties now in the kingdom of God, who would be amenable to them, if not objectors against giving the gospel of salvation to a world perishing in sin?

But what are the chief objections? A mere glance at them will be sufficient to convince us, that to stumble at objections here, is but the part of an uncandid or sadly misguided mind. No objections to progress in missions are weightier than those which are derived from the following sources: A certain interpretation of prophecy; the expensiveness of enlarging our missionary operations; and the wants of Home.—The view of prophecy in question is that which postponing the triumph of Christianity to the personal return of Christ, and making unprecedented corruption in the church and in the world the occasion of that return, renders all previous attempts at evangelization a wasteful and vain expenditure. But can there be a reasonable doubt as to the unsoundness of an exposition or use of prophecy, which makes the Bible at variance with itself; which sets the prophecies against the commandments, the plans and purposes of God against obedience to his revealed will; and which makes void his gracious promises. With whatever ingenuity and power such teaching may be maintained, is it to be received as the true sense of scripture; is it to be believed in, or regarded for one moment with the least allowance? It is the charge of Christ to us, that we give ourselves to the evangelizing of the world: this we certainly know. Shall we now hearken to expounders who would discourage us from obeying our Divine Master? It is not for any man to know with certainty, the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power: These are the secret things which belong to the Lord

* Deut. xiii. 1—5.

our God. Among the things which are revealed, and which belong to us and our children, none is plainer, none more imperative, none more important, than that we go forward as fast as possible with the work of propagating the gospel; and to cease from, or to be at all hindered in this work, because a prophetic theory is against it, is to hearken unto man more than unto God.

The objections from expense are not less repulsive. They imply either that the silver and gold of the earth do not belong to God; or that when he created the precious metals he did not know how much of them he should need for the accomplishment of his ends, or else could not create enough; or that when he made us his stewards he put himself out of ownership, so that we were no longer to regard his interest in the use of property; or that he has given us particular instruction against liberal appropriations for the spread of the gospel, and against self-denial and sacrifices of ease and pleasure for Christ's sake; or, finally, that all these great and shameless impieties are facts.

There is in these objections an effrontery which entitles them to indignant resentment. They are made in the face of existing facts, by which they are reproved of glaring hypocrisy. While it is alleged that our missions are too expensive to admit of further advancement, there are not a few members in our churches with more wealth already in possession than can well belong to any one without danger to his soul, who are yet proceeding on to lay up treasures upon treasures, to themselves; adding house to house, and field to field, and investment to investment, and the passion for accumulation enlarged and strengthened by every new accession. And of the rest, there is only here one, and there another, who restrict themselves of any indulgence for the gospel's sake! What respect should be paid to objections on the score of expense, while self-denial is so great a stranger amongst the professed disciples of the cross?

And, after all, what is the truth as to the cost of missions? As a very remarkable illustration on this point, a statement shall be repeated from the Day Spring, with a few verbal changes, concerning the mission at the Sandwich Islands. The pecuniary expense of that mission during twenty-three years has but a little exceeded half a million of dollars. And what has been the result? The language has been reduced to writing; a variety of religious works with the entire Bible have been translated and printed in it, and circulated in great numbers; forty-two thousand persons have been taught to read them; twenty-two churches have been organized, to which twenty-five thousand natives have been admitted; seminaries for training teachers have been established; Christian marriage has been introduced in place of former unspeakable licentiousness; intemperance has been nearly banished; and morality and social improvement have been advanced among the rulers and people; a written constitution and laws have been introduced; and the nation, as it were, a new-

created people has recently taken rank among the great nations of the civilized world:— all for half a million. The result not only great, but good, and only good to all concerned. There is no painful drawback.

What is the cost of other things, and such as wise men approve? The small army of the United States cost last year four millions, nearly eight times as much as this mission from the beginning; and what better results are there to be shewn for it? The original cost of every one of our ships of the line, with one year's expense in service, exceeds what has been spent on this mission. France has expended one hundred and twenty millions, and twenty thousand lives in conquering and holding Algiers; almost two hundred and forty times as much in money, beside the lives, us the entire cost of this mission, and yet what good, to the conquerors or the conquered, has come of it? Christian missions cannot be carried on without pecuniary means. Progress in them will increase the demand for money as well as men. But they are gainful, beyond calculation on the whole. Their reflex influences, to say nothing of their direct results, are more than a hundred fold recompense; and to object to them, because of what they cost, is the madness not only of a rebellion against God, but of sinning against our own richest mercies.

Nor can the objections from domestic exigency better endure examination. They are wholly without force, unless they assume, either that the world has no claim while home has any want unsupplied; or that the wants of home and the world cannot both be met at once; or at least that they cannot be as well met, by receiving simultaneous attention; and if they do involve these assumptions, or either of them, they proclaim their own falsity, and confute themselves. For what is more contrary to truth than that the church is not a debtor to the world till all within her own pale and neighborhood is as the garden of God, or needs no improvement? And not less erroneous are the other positions, that either the world or home must be neglected; that their interests are conflicting; and that if Foreign Missions advance, it must be by exhausting or limiting the resources needed for domestic wants. The work of human salvation is one—the work of God—on whose resources, not ours, it depends; and its parts are so related that it can be neglected no where without injury to the whole, and advanced no where without giving an impulse of new life and strength to the whole: so that contributions to missions wisely made, are in effect contributions to our own churches; nor is it to be questioned that these churches are, at this moment, more benefitted and blessed by means of what they have given for evangelizing the heathen, than they would have been by appropriating it directly to themselves. So preposterous is it to set the claims of home in collision with those of the world, or to imagine that the former will be interfered with by discharging the latter.

It is indeed, wise and requisite, and comformable to scripture precedent, to give present attention to certain portions of the great field rather than others; and among the different localities taken under culture to prefer some one or more, far before the rest; and accordingly, it cannot well be questioned that this country at the present time, should have a very uncommon measure of regard, especially from the American Branch of the Church. The importance of its thorough evangelization is probably overrated by no one. To the soundness of the views, which have been expressed on this subject, with so much earnestness and force, by men of great perspicacity on both sides of the ocean, there can scarcely be a dissenting judgment. So far as can now be seen, all probability and likelihood will fail, or the moral condition of these United States is to decide that of the world. But it is not a logical consequence from this, that we should come to a pause or retard our movements, in the work of Foreign Missions. Our people, whatever they are destined to become, do not yet amount to a fiftieth part of mankind; and it is neither love to the souls of men, nor love to Christ, nor a wise economy, that on a calculation of what a small fraction of the race may grow to in a century or more, will leave the great mass till then, to proceed on to destruction through the third and fourth generations, while the means of evangelizing the whole, are at hand; and while, too, the fraction itself would be better attended to, if the whole were in no way or measure neglected. Never let it be overlooked that the spirit of evangelism is essentially the spirit of foreign missions. In its very nature it is spontaneously and illimitably egressive. It cannot endure confinement. Its irrepressible tendency is to be abroad in all the earth to its utmost bounds, and in all the isles of the sea, wherever man, the redeemed sinner dwells. To restrain is to enervate and oppress it. It will not, cannot neglect home if it be sent away, but if it go not away, it will be as an invalid within doors, rather to be nursed than to diffuse life and strength. What powerful teaching did our Lord employ to enforce this truth; and what is better corroborated by reflection, observation and experience? While, therefore, we institute comparisons between our land and others, our people and others; and while America in its perspective greatness and power rises in our thought above all the rest of the globe, let us take heed lest a selfish nationality, or pride, or carnal reasoning so blind us to the true genius of evangelism, that we be found opposing ourselves to the plans and counsels of Infinite Love.

Nor should we think it needless to qualify our confidence as to the coming fortunes of this or any other nation. We do not certainly know that the world's end, will not come, ere our anticipated importance as a people can be realized. Or, if that should not be, and if our national advancement and influence be not impeded, we are not sure that God judges as we do, in respect of our eligibility, as the people by whom the world is to be saved. As he has often done before, may he not in this matter again disappoint human expectation; and may not the world's enlargement and deliverance arise from an-

other place, which by its comparative obscurity may render the Hand of God more conspicuous.

In conclusion, then, it remaineth, Fathers, Brethren and Friends, that we gird up the loins of our mind, and strengthen ourselves in God for the fulfilment of that glorious work, in reference to which we have now come together. Better were it for us to die, than to be at a stand in our undertaking. That must not be, until God repent of having determined to save the world. He hath prescribed and commanded our race; let us hold on in it till he himself arrest us, even to the end, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth towards those things which are before. The race to an unbelieving heart, cannot but seem impracticable and preposterous; but it hath been set before us by Him, who calleth for things that are not, and they come, and who, has also guarantied our success, by his promise, oath, death, resurrection and enthronement in Heaven. By these, we know that we are not running in vain. Let increasing progress then be our law, as demanded by those great principles and truths of the gospel, on which missions rest their plea and warrant; by the great precept, "go ye into all the world;" by the long ages of neglect, which this high behest of Heaven hath hitherto received; by the slowness of our own past movements; by the strong encouragement we have in the Divine blessing on our churches and missions, and in the existing state of the world; by the cause we have to hope the future course of Christianity on earth, is to be wonderfully accelerated; by the unspeakable dangers in such circumstances as ours, of any other than this onward way; and by those relations of profound and awful interest, in which our missionary operations have placed us, with the hosts of darkness. Let us turn objections into arguments. Let us demand of those who would dishearten us by their prophetic expositions, if they would by their theories, make void the grace and command of God. Let us tell them who would make missions too expensive, of the resources of their Almighty author, and of their own bad stewardship, and of the cost of other things, and of the countless gains of missions, both to the world and the Church. Let us reply to those who plead against us, as opposing domestic interests, that our Heavenly Father can take care of the world and home at once, and that it is home's honor and happiness, as well as duty, not to confine its influences of "saving health," within its own narrow limits, but to expand and spread them out to the ends of the earth. Let all straitness and restraint be insufferable to us. If required to enlarge our plans, let us praise God for this and wrestle with Him by prayer, and with his people by doctrine and remonstrance and entreaty, for the means of enlargement, until they come. If new openings present themselves, every time we survey the field, let us praise God for this; yea, if a new world suddenly open itself to us, for this also, let us praise God; and farther, if the Spirit be poured out at all our stations, so as to demand a univer-

sal movement, on the part of the Church, equal to that of the primitive times, still let us praise God with all our strength, and cry to him day and night, and give him no rest, until the demand be met, and the Church look forth again as in the day of her espousals, beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners, and become an eternal excellency, the joy of the whole earth, having by the Divine blessing on her influence, recovered the human race from the curse of evil, and united it through Christ to the society of the Holy and the Blessed.

WHY THE WORLD IS NOT CONVERTED.

"The world *is not* converted. The melancholy fact stares us in the face. Yet the world *is to be* converted. That delightful truth shines conspicuously on the pages of the Bible. Why is it not already converted? It *ought* to have been converted ere this. The *order* for its conversion was issued eighteen centuries ago; the *means* for its conversion were so long pointed out; and the promise of the *power* necessary to secure its conversion, accompanied the command to convert. And once, and that shortly after the issuing the order, the world *was* well nigh converted. But *now* the world is far, very far from being converted. It "lieth in wickedness." What is the meaning of it? *Why* is it not converted? Whose is the fault? Look not up to heaven for the inquiry, as if the reason was to be found there, among the mysteries of the eternal mind. Look elsewhere. The fact we deplore, results not from any lack of the benevolent disposition of God. No! "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What could he have *felt*, or *done* more? The *object* of his love, the world—its *gift*, his Son! Could it have been more comprehensive, or more munificent? Nor is the reason found in any deficiency in the atonement made by Christ, for he is the propitiation "for the sins of the *whole world*"—the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of *the world*." Nor is it owing to any limitation in the commission of the Holy Spirit; for of him it is testified that when he should "reprove *the world* of sin." And the commission to the *human* agents of the work was as extensive:—"Go ye into *all the world*; preach the gospel to *every creature*; teach *all nations*." And the promise of the presence and power of Christ to be with them is also without restriction. See what goes before, and what comes after that great commission. The words which precede it, are, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." The words which follow, are, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." You must look somewhere else than *upward* for the reason why the world is not converted. Look *beneath—around—within*."

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SERMON CCCLX.

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ABANDONMENT OF GOD DEPRECATED BY THE AGED.

"Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."—Ps. lxxi. 9.

Age is the winter of life. The activity, buoyancy, and hopes of youth are past. The energies of mature years have wasted away and are no more. Bright prospective scenes, on earth at least, are remembered—not anticipated. The associations of the aged are with past generations; with the present they have few things in common. In the midst of the busy multitude, they dwell alone; they are perpetually receding from earth's busy scenes, and are liable to be forgotten. They have need again of that tender, fostering care, once shown them, and which they in their turn have extended to others. How desirable and important is the presence and favor of God! How full of meaning, breathed by them, is the petition in the text, as they lift their dimmed vision to the everlasting hills, and their heavy ear waits to catch the responsive accents of divine love. They are fading—still fading. The generation that once stood thick as summer leaves, are now so few, that "a child may write them." "Our fathers where are they?" One by one we carry them forth from our dwellings to the place of sepulchre; nor are they missed, except by the surviving few who have grown old with them, or have been the companions of their declining years. So disconnected have they become with the associations of the multitude, their quiet exit scarcely raises a ripple upon the sea of life. And this fact shows that they are liable to be too much neglected while living. Few consider the peculiar circumstances and necessities—few sympathize with the trials of the aged. The pulpit, doubtless, speaks less frequently than it should—both to them and for them—thus "turning the hearts of the children to the fathers." I would not have it reckoned among the deficiencies of my ministry, that

the aged had no place in my sympathies, labors, and prayers. Such neglect the genius of the gospel forbids. It is written, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God." And situated as are the aged, in the providence of God, they are entitled to our liveliest sympathies, our most sedulous attention. And it should quicken and also make us patient in the discharge of our duties to them, when we remember that we cannot have them long—and that some of us may have need in our turn, of the kindness and attention which it is our duty and privilege to show. The text gives as our present subject,

ABANDONMENT OF GOD DEPRECATED BY THE AGED.

I. They are peculiarly helpless. Infancy is helpless, but its wants are comparatively few; and if they "grow with the growth" there is generally a corresponding ability to redress them. With age, the reverse is true. Past habits, feelings, pursuits and enjoyments, have created necessities unknown to infancy and which are inseparable from age, while the ability to redress them is constantly diminishing. And not only so, but this feeling of growing helplessness, is to the aged, a painful one, contrasted with past comparative independence. Consequently, many a want is never made known, and also, many that are, from a variety of causes, are never redressed. They therefore suffer rather than complain, and evince in silence, genuine heroism, which, because it is not known, or not appreciated, is not admired or commended. God only knows how much they suffer from their helplessness, how much patience is exercised by them, the reward of which, if they are the children of the Most High, they will surely reap in another world. Unwilling to be burdensome, they are uncomplaining sufferers; and their wants should therefore, if possible, be anticipated and promptly redressed, even though numerous and frequently recurring. And if human hearts fail to sympathize, or grow weary, or are engrossed, as they may be with other cares, how much more necessary, important and desirable are divine compassions—the communications and consolations of infinite love, always sympathetic, unwearied and inexhaustible! Experiencing, or even anticipating this state of dependence and comparative helplessness and its trials, how natural, appropriate, and expressive is the prayer,—"Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."

II. Life, with the aged, is peculiarly void of earthly interest and enjoyment. Cut off from active pursuits, and from the nature of the case, forbidden in the "sere leaf" of life the anticipation of any thing novel or untasted; their thoughts, their conversation, are naturally respecting things long since past. There, in the distance, sometimes in another and distant land, is the place of their birth, the scene of their first intellectual apprehensions, their first hopes and joys. There, too, at successive and not unfrequent intervals, are the wrecks of their exploded schemes of pleasure, honor and wealth. And as they muse, there

are vivid remembrances of many early friends—now no more—their own precursors to the silent tomb. Their own generation have almost all of them gone to their graves. Here and there a survivor—the relic of other days—a cotemporary witness of the swift lapse and ravages of time, serves to assure them of the reality of their desolations and their growing nearness to eternity. Sometimes not one of all those once known, once loved, remains, with whom in conversation to revive recollections, and thus in thought become once more the busy actors in the drama of life. In present passing, and sometimes even exciting scenes, they take no share, feel little or no interest. The busy whirl of pleasures, cares and toils, seems undesirable, now that their tread is feeble and trembling, and their once strong arm is powerless. "They are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way." New voices, faces, plans, new methods of business, new forms of thought, reveal a world about them with which they have scarcely a single association. They are witnesses of changes, scarcely perceptible in progress, but which in their full and concurrent development are greater than can well be conceived, except by those whose protracted existence links the past to the present. And when, during their musings, these and similar considerations throng the mind of dependent, contemplative age, there is experienced an inexpressible loneliness and desolation of soul. The silent lapse of each day separates them further and further still, from all that constituted the zenith of their earthly ambition and joy. The world has gradually receded and time is constantly blotting out the remembrances of the past. Thus the present is perpetually becoming a more perfect blank. The stricken heart sighs and sighs again, nor touches a responsive chord. Some few, perhaps, whom afflictions have schooled into sympathy, their sensitive natures covered with scars from wounds inflicted by an unfeeling and heartless world—victims even to man's tender mercies—may, and do have some sympathy with the aged; having become old before their time, alike and yet unlike, they are enabled from time to time to shed a ray of light into the thick and yet gathering gloom. All this, and more even, being true, how desirable to the aged must be the presence of the Father of spirits, the light of his countenance and the joy of his salvation! The appeal in the text is to the compassion of Jehovah; "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."

III. Bodily infirmities add to the peculiar trials of age. It is doubtless, as a general thing, a mercy that the eye grows dim, and the ear heavy. These senses, the source of much enjoyment under other circumstances, in their diminished perfection correspond more nearly with the diminished powers of bodily and mental endurance. As inlets to the soul, when partially closed they prevent the introduction of much that would only disturb peace of mind and hasten decay. There is much, very much, in this world, in respect to which it is very desirable to be both deaf and blind. To thought, sobered and matured by age and experience, the present, every way considered, seem to be

days of strange degeneracy. Solitary and pensive musings give a peculiar coloring to the intelligence that reaches them, and increase their temptations and liabilities to presage evil. The very elements seem changed in their nature. The breath of spring, the heat of summer and the frosts of winter—food, sleep, are not what they were. Memory is more and more unfaithful to its trust. The mind swings from its balance. Unreal things are imagined, and these most frequently of a painful kind. Real things seems strangely out of place in fitness or order of time through forgetfulness. Past habits of business persuade the necessity of present effort and diligence, even where there is no need of a single anxious care. Not unfrequently there are apprehensions of want, and of cruel neglect. Existence at times seems an intolerable burden. Her powers diminished, nature bends under the weight of years, and seems to ask imploringly for the undisturbed rest and quiet of the grave. How timely, precious and consolatory, under these circumstances, must be assurances from God of renewed youth, vigor, and service in another life and a better world.

IV. Their nearness to eternity makes the presence and favor of God eminently desirable to the aged. The race of life is almost run. The sun of a lengthened and weary day is well nigh ready to set. The lamp of life burns dim and is just ready to expire. The day of grace, the season of probation is also well nigh passed. Sabbaths, sermons and prayers will soon be no more. Death is at hand—"the judge standeth at the door." Eternity with all its boundlessness of glory and shame, joy and wo, life and death, awaits the immortal spirit. At such an hour, and in these circumstances, how painful it must be to an individual to feel that God has left him, and when human sympathy and aid avail so little. If the soul ever knew the blessedness of peace and communion with God, and had learned in the confidence of faith to cast all its care upon him, what strong desires would naturally wing to heaven the prayer contained in the text? And it may be regarded as evidence of having been born from above, when, on the verge of probation and eternity, the soul turns constantly and confidently to God as the chief, the only unfailing source of good—when notwithstanding much infirmity and doubt, faith still clings to and pleads the fulfilment of the divine promise: "Even to good old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you." An earthly father's presence and love, could offer to helpless infancy no such assurances of favor, protection, and support as this promise extends to the believing soul,—thereby putting "underneath the everlasting arms." Thus effectually provided for—age with all its loneliness, dependence, infirmities, and nearness to eternity,—is not altogether an undesirable, and in some respects, may be regarded as an enviable condition. But the presence and favor of God is every thing; and without it, age is an object for heartfelt compassion, the tenderest commisseration—"having no hope and without God in the world,"—here at this point where there is the gradual setting in of "a night that knows no morn." Impenitent and unsancti-

fied age bespeaks christian solicitude and fervent prayer; because of their nearness to the judgment—the exceeding brevity of the remaining space for repentance, together with the accumulated difficulties of delayed repentance. On the other hand, with the mature, the ripe christian, rich in satisfying experience of God's grace and faithfulness, "when trembling on life's utmost verge," we can hardly refrain from the wish to exchange places; we are ready to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." Such are some of the considerations why age deprecates abandonment by Him whose "favor is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life itself."

The aged have also their peculiar and solemn responsibilities.

1. They should seek a confirmed assurance of reconciliation and peace with God. The Saviour himself has said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The characteristics of this "new birth" are genuine, unfeigned sorrow for sin, as "an evil and bitter thing," loathing it, and ourselves on account of it—a deep and abiding sense of our ill deserts, as transgressors of the holy law of God, a hope of salvation by grace through faith in Christ crucified, "Who gave himself for our sins, and was raised again for our justification;" who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, who never yet did, and who never will cast away any that penitently seek him, since he saves most freely the chief of sinners, and by "his blood cleanseth from all sin;" who helps by his all-sufficient grace all that come lowly as did the publican and the prodigal; who is "made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who can say, "In my hand no price I bring; Simply to thy cross I cling." As a consequence of this hope, there is a predominant, all pervading desire, as the only possible return for "love so amazing, so divine," to live solely and forever to the Redeemer—to commend and praise the grace which draws, receives, and rescues from hell even at "the eleventh hour," the chastened, humbled and believing soul. An assurance of having experienced this change of heart arises from an advance in the strength and sincerity of the feelings alluded to, taken in connexion with a class of moral exercises denominated the "fruit of the Spirit;" love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. As it is written, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." There is also, "the witness of the Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God;" known chiefly by its influence in giving clearness to our spiritual vision, strength to our faith, ardor to our love, richness to our consolations, and confidence in anticipation of the judgment. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him." The aged should diligently and prayerfully look for this evidence of their soul's renovation and sanctification, at the same time giving all diligence that they may be found of him in peace, by growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

2. The aged should be patient and faithful unto the end. "Yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." But during this brief period, the aged "have need of patience." The preceding imperfect sketch, which has been given of the trials of age is no picture of the imagination. It hints at sober, solemn realities; so painfully and truly such, that many have been led in consequence of them, to prefer death to life. Ye, whose heads are frosted with age, whose strength withers daily at the touch of time, "ye *have need of patience.*" Be aware of your temptations, your easily besetting sins. Labor and pray that you may submit yourselves meekly to your trials, numerous and painful though they may be, and thus glory in your infirmities. Comfort and sustain your hearts with those consolations which God has made ready to your hands in the gospel of his Son: "casting all your care on Him for he careth for you." Be assured there are those who sympathize with you in your trials, and sorrows, and who have you in daily remembrance at the mercy seat.

Be faithful also unto death. It is not yet time to rest. All danger is not yet past. Let the weapons of spiritual warfare be kept bright. Maintain a close walk with God. If thy once firm step now falters—though on account of your trials, you are sometimes tempted to say with the patriarch Jacob, "all these things are against me,"—still keep your course to the goal and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Lose not the reward of past sufferings and toil through present unfaithfulness and neglect. Spend much of your remaining time on earth in communion with God and in meditation upon his word. Imitate the Psalmist whose devotional writings have instructed your worship, and affected your hearts. "Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud." "Seven times in a day do I praise thee." If indeed you are the Lord's, you now go to his word, to his house, to the family altar and closet, to secure to your souls a perfected preparation for glory. Consider how much occasion you have for gratitude and praise. Through many years, you have been the object of God's tender care, and during all those years you have been daily loaded with his benefits. "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness; and as you wear it, keep your eye constantly upon that one which God has in reversion for those that endure unto the end, and which cannot fade away.

3. Seek to be useful still to others. It is written, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright." Say with David, "O God thou hast taught me from my youth and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also that I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength to this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." "Age should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom."

The patient, cheerful, active piety of the aged, may and does, speak impressively to the hearts of the young. Give them the valuable lessons which your long, and in many instances bitter experience has taught you. Let the bud and the opening flower in them, mature and perfect themselves amid the clusters of your ripe fruit, while they witness the power of religion to sustain and cheer you, the peace thereby of your last hours, and your triumphant ascent to glory. So shall your descending mantles fall upon young Elishas and Samuels, who shall rise up and call you blessed. Age has its advantages for moral purposes; and grey hairs may sow seed that shall spring and bear fruit unto everlasting life, long after they themselves have been hid in the grave. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." And better than marble monuments—than "storied urn or animated bust," is the grateful remembrance, and more useful lives and example of those whom we have mediately blessed. It is for this, God lengthens out existence, and to the humblest effort, when made from a sincere desire to glorify him, he will add his blessing. And useful to the last, earthly existence will sweetly lapse into the life and service of heaven.

Pious age has also its consolations.

1. The wearisome, dangerous part of existence is well nigh finished forever. A few more conflicts and toils—a few more sighs and tears, disappointments and pains, and then comes the blessed, blissful moment that separates from infirmities and grief, from troubled thoughts and fears, from sin and sorrow forever; a moment, which, while it separates from all evil, unites also to all good, and puts the weary, wayworn pilgrim in possession of the long sought rest of heaven—the heir of God in everlasting possession of the heavenly inheritance. Yes! the glorious goal is in view. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." A few more rising and setting suns, and time with you is no more. A few more pulsations, and thy heart, even thine, shall be still. How very near heaven may be—nay, how near it is! How soon it may—it will be possessed! Aged pilgrim, seest thou not in yon horizon the glimmering dawn of thine eternal day? Look up from earth, for see! "the morning cometh." Had ever the voice of God such distinctness? the heavenly song such sweetness? Seemed heaven ever so desirable before? thy God ever so near as now, when in the closet thy softest whisper reaches his ear? Panted thy spirit ever before with such strong desires "to depart and be with Christ?" while thy inmost soul turns imploringly to heaven with the prayer, "Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly." The wing of cherub and seraph seem to waft celestial fragrance from the groves of paradise to animate and allure thee thither. These last days are then, thy best days, and best because the last. Thou wouldst not go back. Thou canst not, nay, wouldst not stand still. How cheering, consoling the thought, thou art so near thine eternal home!

2. Pious age has a rich experience of God's grace. Said one, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God—how great is

the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake I am still with thee." Perhaps the dew of heaven refreshed thy youth, and thou wast early satisfied with God's mercy. How long then, has thy God watched over thee? Against how many temptations has he fortified thee? and from how many perils has he rescued thee? In times of darkness, how often has he been thy light? Under what a load of care, and in the midst of how many and how deep trials he has sustained thee! Who can so speak of divine patience, faithfulness, tenderness, compassion, and mercy as thou? And if the review of thy life abases thee, does it not also magnify to thy soul's apprehension, God's rich grace? And this rich experience is the earnest, the pledge of ultimate fulness of joy. "The Lord will give grace and glory." In an assured hope of heaven, thou mayest cheerfully and confidently "wait all the days of thy appointed time, till thy change come." It is an "appointed time," and must therefore end—end soon. It is a change, not annihilation: a change and a glorious one, too, for thee. Thus, for thee, strong in faith, there are views of the promised land, like those granted to Moses from the top of Pisgah. The very "bitterness of death" seems to be past—the gloom that hung round the grave is fled. It now offers a safe, desirable, temporary lodgment for thy dust, and a convoy of ministering angels are ready to bear thee in triumph to glory. Or if thy heavenly Father sees it best yet a little while to prolong thy pilgrimage, remember the promise which is "yea and amen"—"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.', "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

In conclusion of the subject, I remark, that we are hereby solemnly admonished of our duty to the aged. God has seen fit in his wise and gracious providence, to spare to us these relics of former generations. They are in the midst of us—in your families. Some of them are parents who have done so much for you, and to whom from you, much, very much is due in return. For their toil, their counsels, their example, their prayers, are you their debtors! Soon they must go the way of all the earth. Yet a little while and they shall not be. You will miss them from their retired walks, from your tables, and from their quiet rooms. The sculptured stone will mark their silent resting place, and as the seasons alternate, the wintry blasts will sigh their requiem, or the green grass wave over their graves The remembrance of kindness shown to them, will be grateful to your hearts when they are no more. Their dependence, infirmities, their temporal necessities and spiritual interests, bespeak the manifestation towards them of a noble, self-sacrificing, filial piety. Let your intercourse with them be characterized by great respect, patience and tenderness, remembering that the cup which you put into their hands, your children may mete out to

you. And if they are christians, who can tell what blessings may descend and rest upon you and yours in answer to their prayers, when they shall be with God? Anticipate their wants—relieve, if possible, their necessities, and tenderly guard their second childhood, as they did you, when first your steps commenced threading the mazes of this mortal life. Especially, if in any case the aged are strangers to the consolations of religion, commend to them the gospel of God. Bear them on your hearts in prayer in the closet, at the family altar, and in the place of social prayer. It may be God will give them repentance unto life even at the eleventh hour. It may be they feel even now their need of mercy—are ready to ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" —that they would fain hope there is mercy for them, and yet are ready to despair of heaven. Thus they balance between hope and fear, life and death, heaven and hell. They have need of your most assiduous christian care. In the spirit of Him who will not "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax," assure them that "with God all things are possible," who so magnifies his grace, though contrary to nature and providence, that a man is sometimes "born when he is old." And the hope of success may encourage them to seek the Lord, and find, and so live forever. And the conversion of one, may give rise to a train of influences that shall be as life from the dead in respect to others. And these aged ones, at length all gathered into the fold of Christ, shall be found in him, and numbered with the redeemed of God, in addition to that goodly number of pious ancestors now in glory—where may God in his rich mercy and grace bring them and us, when we shall have each fulfilled as an hireling our days, and faithfully served God in our generation. Amen.

SERMON CCCLXI.

BY REV. A. T. CHESTER,

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THE WHOLE FAMILY OF CHRIST.

"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."—EPH. chap. 3, verse 15.

This is one of the incidental remarks with which the word of God abounds, conveying to our minds more instruction, than it was the direct purpose of the sacred writers to communicate. Such hints, casually thrown out as it may appear to us, though all is under the direction of the spirit of inspiration, are exceedingly interesting, and the arguments which are thus furnished in support of doctrines, are exceedingly weighty.

The apostle in the context is assuring the Ephesian christians that he remembers them in his prayers before God. "For this cause," says he, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"—this is merely the introduction to what he designs to say;—he proceeds to set before them the purport of his prayer,—"that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his spirit in the inner man;"—but let us now stop at the introduction: in it there is set forth a most interesting truth, upon which it may be profitable to dwell.

The Church of Christ, in heaven and on earth, constitutes one great family.

The religion of Jesus Christ has instituted new relationships among mankind. It has connected Christians with heaven even while they remain on earth. It has made, in the highest sense, God their father, Jesus Christ their elder brother, and all the company of the glorified saints their kindred in the skies,—while at the same time, it has bound them by ties stronger than household love, to people of every nation and tongue under the whole heaven, among whom the love of Jesus has been shed abroad with its redeeming power. Some of us belong to this great family; and as when a circle is formed in their father's

house, of a portion of the members of a family widely scattered, the conversation must relate in part to those who are still absent, but who bear the endearing name of brother or sister, so, as we have come up to-day, from various parts of the land, to this house of our common father,—as we are enjoying the common blessings of his presence, and these exalted privileges of his grace, let us regard the nature of this relationship, the extent of the family circle and the condition of the absent ones, and seek to feel and to cherish those emotions in our own souls, which must arise from such communion with each other and with God.

I. The relation of Christians to each other is a *family relation.* The term which is employed in the text to represent it is derived from the word, *father.* It thus declares that the Church is a family in this sense, that its members have all the same father. This is true indeed of all the children of men by creation. Have we not all one father? But the wicked have denied and broken up this relationship, and now are to be considered not as united to God by this tender tie, but as condemned criminally in the presence of their Judge. The disciples of Christ, however guilty they may have been—however long they have wandered as prodigals from their father's house, have come back—have listened to the call of mercy from their gracious God, and have received as a free gift the pardon of their sins, which secures the salvation of their souls. They have received as the first-fruits of their reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, and the spirit of adoption also, whereby they cry, with child-like confidence and love, Abba, Father. There may have been many different circumstances connected with their conversion; they may have been awakened by various instrumentalities; they may have come into the kingdom of the Redeemer at different periods; their words of penitence and faith may have been in various languages,—but whether the "God be merciful to me a sinner" was uttered in the polished tones of a Castilian, or the rough breathings of a Hottentot, it has been heard in heaven, and the penitent has become a child of God.

This is recognized as a *family* relationship in the word of God. "I will be a father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." "Whosoever," says Christ, "shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." The spirit of obedience unto God is the distinctive mark of a real Christian, and this binds him to Christ in these endearing relations. The union with Christ which is thus formed is represented by the most significant language. It is the union of the branch with the vine,—of the husband with the wife,—of the members with the body. Such is the measure of the Savior's love for those whom he has redeemed that he permits the use of such terms to express it. Surely then those who are thus joined to Christ are related to each other, as brothers and sisters. In the Scriptures the word "brethren" is frequently employed to denote the relationship existing among the children of God. It is once used in connection with the statement of a

duty, growing out of this relationship, which is startling. "We," says the Apostle, "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And he uses the same word in bringing to view a test of Christian character—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

This relationship has ever been recognized among the disciples of Christ. One of the common expressions among the ancient saints in speaking of each other was, *brethren*;—and in later times, even down to the present day, *brother*, and *sister*, are the affectionate terms by which those address each other who are united in Christian love. Every departure from the spirit of ardent affection, all neglect of brotherly regard and sympathy is seen and felt to be unworthy of a follower of Christ. Love to God the Father, love to Christ the Savior, and not least in importance, love to the children of God wherever they may be found, is an essential element of Christian character; and this burning in purity and power in each Christian's heart, makes his union with his fellow Christians delightful and profitable, and gives to all, thus united, the character of a happy family.

There is another point presented to view in the text which exhibits the nature of this relationship. "Of whom, the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"—all have received a name from Jesus Christ. Each one has this proof of connection with the great family, that he bears its name. We know what this name is on earth. It is *Christian*. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Before and in other places they had received different names, generally opprobrious and insulting epithets. But at Antioch, and at all other places, since the apostolic age, they have been called Christians, from the great founder of their religion. And this is their common name all over the earth. The other words in which grace and mercy are made known to men are translated into the languages and dialects of all who hear the gospel. But this word, the distinctive name of God's people, is not changed. It is the same word, though written in the various characters of almost all the languages of the earth; it has the same sound in all, as nearly as the different tongues will admit. Have we not reason to suppose that this is the very name of the redeemed ones above—that this word is not translated even into the dialect of heaven—that *Christ* is the name, at which every knee shall bow even in eternity, and *Christian* the name of the family on high.

II. Let us regard the extent of this family, and the condition of those who are absent from us.

A portion, as we are taught by the text, are in heaven. Yes—there is the Father, and the first-born at his right hand, upon their glorious thrones, and around them are gathered those which have been saved from among men, and washed in the blood of Christ. These are called the Saints. These have been our fellow men,—some of them our particular friends and kindred. They have once been subject to all the infirmities of our human nature. They have sinned and suffered—they have sickened and died. The ties by which we were

bound to them on earth were broken, and we seemed to be bidding them farewell for ever, as we wiped the death-dew from their brow and closed their eyes in darkness,—as we placed them in the grave and left them to its silence. But these have not perished,—these if they have died in the Lord have joined that portion of the family which is on high. Yonder—not far off—much nearer than we sometimes suppose, are these glorified spirits, the family in heaven. Look upon the scene, as described by one who saw it in vision. There is a great multitude, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. Hear their cry, as with loud voice they say, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." See, all the angels around the throne are falling upon their faces worshipping God, as they join in the song, and say, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God, for ever and ever, Amen." Do you ask, "what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" A heavenly voice answers, "these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Here they are in the presence of God, perfectly holy, perfectly happy, and they shall go no more out for ever. This is the condition of that portion of the family already in heaven. Who of us has not contributed to make it up? Have you given up an aged father or mother, who has been cut down as a shock of corn fully ripe—whose spirit has been cheerfully resigned into the arms of Jesus at the bidding of death? See amid the worshipping throng is that revered parent, now arrayed in immortal youth, and striking with vigorous hands the harp of praise. This is your father, your mother still. Has the mourning wife, or husband committed to the grave the cold body of the one most beloved on earth?—one who could say amid the bitterness of such a separation, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better." See that dear friend is clothed in white before the throne, and is joining in the anthems of heaven. Do you grieve to know that the cherished object of your earthly affection is in such company and enjoying such bliss? You may love still—for however remote heaven may be from earth, yet these are a portion of the same family to which you belong. Have you children in heaven? Have you been called to give up those who in their tender years were consecrated to Christ? whose early affection was fixed upon the Savior of sinners? These precious spirits are in heaven, ripening for immortal joy. Mother! the laughing babe which has been called from your embrace before it could comprehend the

power and warmth of your affection, has not lived in vain; Baptized with the blood of Jesus, it has been admitted to heaven; and while you are shedding bitter tears amid the sin and misery of earth, it is raising its infant voice in the chorus of the skies;—nursed by older saints, reposing in the bosom of its Savior, it shall be forever safe and happy. It has not been cast out from the care of the family,—before you placed its cold clay in the dust, angels had borne its glowing spirit to its home in heaven. Is it not happiness amid our wo, to have such assurances as these from the word of God? Is it not honor to be connected with such spirits in the brighter world?

Nor are these unwilling to acknowledge the relationship. If ever the exalted might look down with contempt upon those who are beneath them and deny all acquaintance with them, surely these who are in heaven may forget and neglect their brethren of the earth. But so it is not. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Think you they come not most willingly, on such an errand, to those with whom they have dwelt in love on earth, and from whom they are separated only for a little time?

This is the family in heaven—already numerous. In it are all the holy men that have lived and died; the patriarchs, and their pious children; the leaders of Israel, and the faithful of the people; all the godly kings of antiquity, and those of their subjects who worshipped Jehovah; the prophets, and those who listened with believing hearts to their prophecies; the good of all ages and countries, who have depended upon the merits of a crucified Savior for salvation, whether they looked forward to him through the types and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, or back to Calvary, to behold in Jesus of Nazareth the Lamb slain for sin, from the foundation of the world. There are the martyrs who have defended the faith, and sealed their confession with their blood; the pilgrims who have preferred "freedom to worship God" to every other blessing; the heralds of the cross to the ends of the earth, each with his company of redeemed ones from the north, the south, the east and the west, the first-fruits of missionary labor, already harvested, gathered safely into the garner of God. This is the family in heaven; a portion of the great family which is named from Christ. How numerous it is we cannot tell. What it shall at length be, when all are gathered home, we are told;—"an exceeding great multitude which no man can number." It will be large enough to fill the desires of the benevolent heart of Jesus. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

But as yet a multitude of the redeemed are left on earth. To these we turn—*the family on earth.* Do we ask, who are they? Is not the whole human race one great family? "Hath not God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth?" Can we ever be insensible to the ties which bind us to the whole human family? Yet the relationship which christianity originates, is higher than this natural connection of man with his fellows. The

christian must not, and will not overlook the one, but by the other he is most sacredly bound. The family of Christ, alas, is not as extensive as the family of man. It should be. He who rules in heaven has a just claim to the affection and service of every creature below. But his particular family is that portion of mankind, which, in accordance with the claims of the gospel, has submitted to his authority. To speak more particularly, those individuals of the human race, who have been led, by the teaching of the gospel and of the spirit of God, to see and feel their own sinfulness and ruin, and to receive Jesus Christ in penitence and faith as their only Saviour, trusting alone to the efficacy of his precious blood for salvation,—these, all these, and only these belong to the family of Christ on earth. There are others indeed on earth who sustain a peculiar relationship to this great family,—Christ has his chosen ones among men, who may yet be living in impenitency and sin, but who shall assuredly be brought into the Kingdom of the Redeemer. These are *members elect.* We cannot know them at present, but Christ who has purchased their souls with his blood knows them—their names are graven upon his hands; the spirit knows them, and in the appointed time will certainly introduce them into the bosom of the family on earth. This family embraces all the invisible Church of Christ still on earth. It may be more or less extensive, in any particular locality, the visible Church. It may not include some who make profession of love to God, and who have taken the vows of consecration upon them, and thus became attached to the outward fold of Christ; it may include some, who from various reasons have made no public profession of faith; but it does embrace all those, and only those who have been born of the spirit, and who are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. Each contrite, humble disciple of Christ is a member of this family.

Where then should we look for such? Are they all gathered within the limits of one country? Are they all to be found within the pale of our sect? Believe it not. Some may say, doth not wisdom dwell with us?—is there not safety alone with us? The Jew may consider himself the only favorite of God, and in turn the former Gentile may anathematize the outcast Jew; but the universal Church,—the company of true disciples,—the christian family has the *whole earth* for its dwelling-place. Each one must be renewed of the Holy Ghost, must be united to Christ by a living faith, by which the merits of Christ shall be made to secure his pardon and salvation, and then he is a member of the invisible Church—of this family of Christ. And out of this, there can be no salvation. That is, regeneration and repentance and faith, by which man becomes a member of the invisible Church, are essential to salvation, and nothing else can be. It is of course the duty of each renewed and penitent sinner to make profession of his faith in Christ before the world, and join those who are organized as the visible Church of Christ, in their efforts to promote the glory of the Redeemer: but little confidence can be placed in his avowed change of heart, if he does not seek to do this; yet if he fail to do it through

inability,—if like the penitent thief he has no time to unite with the Church on earth, he shall yet, if truly penitent, be received into the Church above. Away with that exclusiveness which would shut out a devout christian from our warmest christian love, because he has not our own distinctive name—a name which is perpetuated only to keep in mind the departure of the disciples of Christ, from the unity and purity and love of the Apostolic Church. God forbid, that any part of the disciples of Christ should seek to make any other name more prominent, than that by which the whole family, in heaven and earth is named. Let us, my brethren, cultivate that spirit which will allow us to look among all denominations of christians for our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. If only a heart is found beating with love to Christ, let us respond to that heart in love,—such an one belongs to the family of Christ.

And are not such found among christians of every different sect. If the Bible is received as the word of God—if the threatenings of God's word are received as truth and as fully believed as its promises,—among the votaries of any religious system which thus leaves room for the salvation of the penitent sinner by the sole efficacy of redeeming blood, whatever differences may exist in the detail of doctrines, or the forms of worship, may we not confidently look for the members of the family of Christ?

Where are these our brothers and sisters in Christ? Rather ask, where are they not? Already are they taking possession of the whole earth. The missionary of the cross has rivalled the daring explorer of unknown lands, in his efforts to extend this family circle over the whole world. He has rivalled the anxious and active trader, seeking to export the precious bread of life to the destitute of other regions; and now, already, are established branches of this family in numerous portions of the once heathen world. Yes, christian, you have brothers and sisters among the proud Chinese, the idolatrous Hindoos, the degraded Africans, the ferocious Sea-islanders. The Pagan has cast aside his idol,—the Mohommedan has forsworn his prophet,—the Jew has ceased to curse Jesus of Nazareth, and these have been united to the family of Christ. In enlightened and christian lands, multitudes may be found belonging to this family,—of all conditions, and of every age. The gospel has power over the high and the low—the learned and the ignorant. There are not wanting kings and princes, who bow in subjection to the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. In our own National Council, there has been for a long time, a small company of men, who find time, amid all their business, to meet together frequently for social prayer. Some of the most affluent of our land, have consecrated themselves and their property to God. Some of the most learned, have devoted their mental powers and their valuable acquisitions of knowledge to their Maker,—while multitudes of every variety of condition, the widows with their mites—the beggar with his sores, have the same claim of relationship. There are the aged, whose hoary heads are indeed a crown of glory; the mature, in their strength

and beauty; the young, just entering upon life's duties and cares; aye, and children too—mere babes, who have embraced Jesus as their Saviour,—all these we must greet as members of the family of Christ.

How numerous this family on earth may be, we cannot tell. Perhaps it always exceeds the ignorance and weak faith of the children of God. We are too apt to yield to despondency, like the prophet, when persecuted and terrified, he said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord of Hosts—for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." This was the answer of God to the fainting Elijah,—"I have left me seven thousand in Israel, which have not bowed unto Baal." Whatever the number may now be we have the assurance, that the time is hastening on, when "the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God," and when "all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest."

Nor can we be sure that this is all. Who shall say that the power of Christ's redeeming love does not extend to other worlds around us? If sin hath also entered those bright abodes, who shall say that this world may not be to them, what Jerusalem is to us, the place of their Savior's death? May not this world be the Calvary of the universe, to which the eyes of multitudes of this family, in other worlds, are directed, as the theatre of Christ's suffering and death?

However this may be, it will be a large and glorious company, when all who are now at a distance, inhabiting different countries, and perhaps different worlds, shall be gathered into one place, even into the Paradise above; when the family on earth shall be joined to that in heaven, and henceforth and forever constitute one. Other families are broken up. Sometimes a prodigal son disturbs the peace of the whole household; or death enters, and takes away its members one by one, until naught is left but the remembrance of former joys. But this family shall have no such disturbances—no such separations. There at length in our Father's house, if we are christians, we shall join our elder brethren amid their glory, and there we shall be joined by all who hereafter, to the end of time, shall believe in Christ: then with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and John, and Paul, and Saints of lesser name, with our own kindred, who have been also the kindred of Christ,—and above all, with Christ Jesus himself to lead us to fountains of living waters, we shall spend eternity in the praise and service of the Most High. Then shall ascend the final song, from ten thousand times ten thousand voices, discordant on earth, but harmonious in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And then, "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," shall join in the chorus of the redeemed, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever."

My hearers, do you already belong to this family? Be not deceived. Have you the *evidence of love?* love to God, the Father—love to Christ, the Savior, and that love to the brethren by which you may know that you have passed from death unto life? Be not satisfied with the evidence of love for your own particular Church, or your own denomination. The only love, to which you may trust as a test of christian character, is *a love of Chriatians, as such*, wherever they may be, and under whatever circumstances. Have you *family love* for the children of God?—then may you suppose that you belong to this family. And will not this lead you to regard those among you as brethren?—to love them affectionately and fervently? Says our Savior to his disciples, in the fulness of his affection, "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you." Is there any measure for the generous compassion, the self-denying love of Jesus towards his disciples—those for whom he has died, and for whom he rose from the dead? Can we measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of Christ? It passeth knowledge. Yet here is a comparison, instituted by Jesus himself, "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you." The depth and power of the tide of divine love which flows from the heart of the great Jehovah towards his eternal and equal Son—his only-begotten and well-beloved, is equalled by the current of affection which is ever gushing from the Savior's compassionate bosom towards his chosen ones. Now hear the command of the Savior for family love among his disciples; "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as* I have loved you." The measure of the christian's love for every other christian, is to be the love of Christ for sinners—nay, it is to be measured by the love of Jehovah for his dear Son. As pure, as fervent, as self-denying, as controlling as the love of Christ for his children, and the love of God for Christ, must be the love of christians for each other. Will not the exercise of such love make them feel like members of the same family? Will it not lead them to be kind and compassionate and forbearing? to bear each others burdens, and to seek each others good? Remember, we are called to these duties, not merely that we may be useful to others, but that we may find evidence for ourselves that we really belong to Christ. If we have this requisite spirit shall we not be ready to greet a stranger with a brother's love, if only he comes to us with the name of christian? When our hearts cease to expand in warm affection towards those who bear the name of our blessed Redeemer, faith is dead within us, and hope should be. Let this common name in which we rejoice and trust, ever be dearer than any other. Let this sacred bond of union be cherished above every earthly tie, for these shall be severed, but that shall endure.

Have some of us, my hearers, no connection with this family? And yet all have an original title to this relationship. We are all the children of God. Alas, some of us who have wandered, have refused to eturn—some are alienated from God, and have become his enemies by wicked works. The proofs of such a condition are want of interest in

religion, and want of affection for the children of God. If there be nothing else against you—if there be no outbreaking sin—no violence of passion, yet the want of this peculiar love is proof of disunion from the family of Christ. And can you remain thus separated from the people of God? The arms of Jesus Christ, and the bosom of the family of Christ are open to receive you. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. Resist not the pleadings of those who love your souls. Trifle not with the Spirit's influences—with the Savior's blood. Seek admission into the company of the faithful on earth, that you may share with them the blessedness of Heaven.

SERMON CCCLXII.

HOW OUGHT I TO KEEP THE SABBATH?

Remember the Sabbath day.—Exodus 20.

"This is an interesting question. It intimately concerns every one who hopes finally to enjoy an everlasting rest in heaven. The character of a man depends very much upon the manner in which he observes the Sabbath. And so of a whole community. This institution was established by God himself, and was intended to exert a powerful and salutary influence not only upon individuals, but upon whole nations. Go to any place you please and scrutinize the habits and character of the people, and you may easily be satisfied whether they pay a proper respect to the fourth commandment.

The duties of the Sabbath are in many respects peculiar. They differ from the duties appropriate to other days. Many things which it would be right and proper to do at other times, God has forbidden me to do on the day which he calls his own. I must not labor on the Sabbath, that is, I must not engage in my ordinary worldly pursuits, though duty requires me to attend diligently to those on other days. The prohibition of the divine law does not end here. I am commanded to shut out worldly thoughts from my mind, and worldly feelings from my heart, and give myself up to the delightful services of religion.

I can now think of a great many things which I ought NOT to do on the Sabbath, but which I sometimes find in myself a strong disposition to indulge in. Some of these I shall mention.

I. I ought NOT to lie in bed later on Sabbath morning than on any other. The early hours of the day should be given to God. Their breath should be esteemed sweeter and more precious than that of any other morning in the week. The sluggard who loves his pillow and will not rise because his worldly business does not call him, shows that he has little regard for the delightful privileges which the Sabbath affords. He loses what can never be made up to him, though he may not be sensible of his loss. He unfits himself in a great measure for the sacred duties of the day. I must take care not to imitate him. The pleasures of protracted sleep in the morning are nothing in comparison with the richer and more rational enjoyments, which I find in

reading my Bible or meditating upon some serious subject. I wrong myself as well as sin against God, if I waste the "sweet hours" of Sabbath morning upon my bed. *I ought not to do it.*

II. I ought NOT to spend too much of the morning in dressing myself for church, and otherwise *preparing* for the religious duties of the day. I ought to be prepared to *commence* the Sabbath with the duties that appropriately belong to it. I must not prolong the previous week by adding to it any part of that day; *all* of which God has set apart for himself. It is very easy, and I am very apt to waste many a precious hour of this hallowed season in *unnecessary* attention to my person or matters which I ought not to allow to divert my mind from more important subjects.

III. I ought NOT, when on my way to the house of God, to talk or think upon subjects that have a tendency to unfit my mind for the services of the sanctuary. Worldly and distracting thoughts are sufficiently prone to steal my attention when listening to the preacher, though I make every effort to avoid them and have endeavored to shield my mind against them by previous prayer and meditation. But when I allow myself to think or converse upon topics inappropriate to the Sabbath until I enter the door of the church, I am sure to be harassed and disturbed by an uncomfortable train of reflections during the whole service. The thoughts which I have cherished and voluntarily taken with me to my seat, will not readily leave me to a calm and devout attention to the word of God. They are so obstinate and persevering in their solicitations that I sometimes know not what to do. I fight against them with all my strength, and still gain but a poor and partial victory.

There is hardly any thing in which I experience greater difficulty or find greater self-denial necessary than in regulating my conversation aright when going to the house of God. If I chance to be in company with a friend who is not pious, it may require a sacrifice of what the world deem politeness or sociability to refrain entirely from all conversation upon subjects of a worldly nature. The news of the past week are fresh in the memory, and nothing is more natural and common than to talk them over. It is exceedingly pleasant to exchange opinions on the current topics of the day; and one who should refuse to do it simply because it was the Sabbath, might be considered over strict and puritanical. Besides, this friend, especially if I do not see him often, may have a claim upon my particular attention, and Christian politeness requires that I should have a kind and affectionate regard for his feelings. I may know at the same time that serious conversation is not what he desires. He wishes to talk of the political movements or peculiar aspect of the times, or the manifold schemes of benevolence, or the rapid advancement of society. In such a case I must be careful not to manifest greater regard for his *present* feelings or gratification than for his *eternal* welfare. The high obligations of Christian faithfulness are upon me. I must discharge my duty to God, to him and to myself, at the same time. How can I do this, if my

conversation is wholly of a worldly nature, and in no respect different from what it would be likely to be on any other day of the week? I am persuaded *I ought not to be thinking or conversing upon worldly matters, when on my way to the house of God.*

IV. I ought NOT to engage in common amusements or recreation, when not at church. True I may be cheerful and ought to be so, and may relax my mind in pleasant and animated conversation, or in a great variety of other ways. But I must look well to the moral and religious tendency of every kind of relaxation in which I allow myself. A boundless field of *proper* and *allowable* pleasure lies before me. I may recount the scenes and incidents of my past life—call to mind the goodness and mercy of God in sustaining me and leading me safely through so many dangers, and in giving me so many privileges and so much happiness. I may look forward to the bright scenes and pure enjoyments of the heavenly world; and if my heart is right, may, as it were, enter upon them by anticipation. Such thoughts and contemplations are sweet and refreshing to those who love God, and shall they not be so to me? Shall they not make a part of my Sabbath-day recreation?

A Christian is hardly in danger of indulging in worldly amusements on the Sabbath, it would be so glaringly inconsistent both with his feelings and profession.

But the case of those who are not Christians, is very different. The temptation for them to indulge in what they perhaps may deem innocent diversions, is strong and besetting. They may find themselves engaged in them before they are aware. But let them take heed. They cannot plead exemption from any duties which are binding upon the Christian. Every act of theirs which would be wrong or criminal in a professor of religion, is wrong and criminal in them, and has a tendency to hinder them from becoming Christians. Worldly amusements on the Sabbath, however harmless they may appear, sweep away from the mind whatever of seriousness may have been occasioned by listening to the preacher—they dissipate the thoughts and drown reflection, and render the heart insensible to eternal things. They have been the instruments of perdition to millions;—I would not have them such to me. *I ought not then to indulge myself in them on the Sabbath.*

V. I ought *not* to read books on the Sabbath, that are not of a religious character or tendency. But why not? Because it would be as direct a violation of the fourth commandment as it would be to labor with my hands. The moral law of which the command, "to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy," is a part, has respect to the mind rather than the body. It is a law by which God governs the spirits of men, and may be transgressed in the stillness of private retirement as well as in the noise and bustle of a crowd in the streets. The reading of books which have not a religious tendency is often more unfavorable *to such a state of mind* as we should always cherish and maintain on the Sabbath, than almost any kind of bodily labor. It

shuts out serious thoughts, leaving no room for them in the mind. I have observed that many who would not on any account, be seen occupied on the Sabbath in what, they consider, worldly business, feel little or no compunction for perusing works of history, travels, science, literature, and so forth, which have no connexion with religion. They regard this as a proper manner of spending the hours that are not occupied in public worship. Reading is not their every day employment; and, on this account hardly seems to be a worldly business. Besides, they disturb no one----all is done in the stillness of solitude, and their example they think, is not so pernicious to the interests of society, as that of the man who attends to his ordinary pursuits on the Sabbath. But are their reasons sufficient to justify the practice in question? Is the reading of books which are not of a religious character or tendency in any way more nearly allied to the appropriate duties of the day which the Author of all our blessings requires us to keep holy, than any other employment that does not interrupt the quiet or devotion of others? Might not the merchant post his books, or the cashier prepare his bank bills for circulation, or the mechanic work in his shop, or the farmer in his barn, as well as one who is fond of reading, peruse such books as I have referred to in the parlor, or his chamber? I have often thought upon this subject, and am fully convinced that I *ought not to spend the Sabbath in reading books, that have no particalar tendency to inspire me with such sentiments and feelings, as the whole spirit of its original design and institution requires of those who would properly observe it and profit by it.*

IV. I ought *not* to form plans or make arrangements on the Sabbath for the business of the week. This I find myself at times quite too much disposed to do. When I expect to engage in any new undertaking, or take a journey, or receive a visit from particular friends in the course of the week, it requires an effort to keep all thoughts of these things out of my mind. They rush upon me unexpectedly and not unfrequently trouble me exceedingly,----for I feel all the time that I ought not to indulge them. They have no right to my attention during the hours God has set apart for his especial service. They may sometimes cost me a painful struggle, but *I must not allow them a place in my mind, if I would have a pure conscience.*

VII. I ought *not* to neglect private religious duties on the Sabbath, because I am occupied so much of the time in public worship. I ought to be even more fervent in my supplications and spend a longer time in my closet than is, on other days, usual. I must strive to live very near to God, and then will the Sabbath shed a sanctifying radiance over every other day of the week.

I ought *not* to allow the Sabbath to be to me a dull, uninteresting day. It should be the happiest and most delightful day of the seven. It was intended by its Author to be a joyful season, in which the heart should overflow with gratitude and holy joy, and exult in rapturous anticipation of an endless Sabbath in heaven. It brings along with it a train of most interesting and grateful recollections. It carries the

thoughts back to that eventful morning when some pious women and two of the disciples went early to the Sepulchre, and found that Jesus was not there. He had risen, as he had told them----death had not power to hold him. On the Sabbath he met his disciples and by the gracious words he spoke, filled them with joy, revealing himself as a triumphant Redeemer who had achieved the great work of man's Salvation. On the Sabbath too, he rode on a bright cloud to heaven, leaving to his disciples the sustaining assurance that he would be with them, to the end of the world. On the Sabbath, the Holy Spirit came down and converted in a single day more than three thousand souls. Every thing connected with the history of the Sabbath is adapted to awaken the most pleasing emotions, and to render its return delightful. *It ought not then to be to me a tiresome or uninteresting season.*

The Sabbath is exactly adapted to my wants—it is a boon which I would not exchange for all the treasures emboweled in the earth—it was given me in order that, by a proper improvement of its privileges, I might be prepared for the hidden joys and glory of an endless Sabbath in heaven. In future, I hope to make more of the Sabbath, and keep it as I shall wish I had done, when I exchange its privileges and employments for those of an unchanging state in the coming world."

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SERMON CCCLXIII.

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THE GREAT CONFLICT.

"We wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Ephesians vi. 12.

In this passage of scripture, as in many others, there is an express reference to a mighty conflict, carried on in the moral and spiritual world, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, the sons of God and the children of the wicked one. "We *wrestle*, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The fact of such a conflict I hardly need take time to consider. It has been so obvious even to heathen nations, as to give rise to a belief in two opposing divinities; the god of light, and the god of darkness; the one good, and the other evil. This fact is perfectly obvious to every observer of the affairs of men. Every where, we see virtue conflicting with vice, right with wrong, holiness with sin. Indeed, we more than see this order of things; we *feel* it in our own breasts. Every man—who is not so far gone in iniquity, as to make no resistance to its reigning power—is conscious of an inward struggle. He has evidence enough of the great conflict of which I speak, in his own spirit. Assuming, therefore, the *fact* of the conflict referred to in the text, and in a multitude of other scriptures, it is proposed, in this discourse, to consider,

I. The leaders in it.
II. The scene of it.
III. The hosts engaged.
IV. The manner in which it is carried on. And

V. What are to be its issues or results.

The leaders in the conflict of which we speak, are the Lord Jesus Christ on the one side, and the Prince of devils on the other. This we learn from many passages of scripture, in which these two great personages are set over, one against the other, in the attitude of generalissimos, or leaders. To give but a single example: In the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, immediately preceding the annunciation of the Millennium, John saw the heavens opened, "and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him is called *Faithful* and *True*, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself; and he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name was called *the Word of God*. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean." There can be no doubt as to the character of this royal personage. "His name was called (*the Logos*) *the Word of God*." He was unquestionably *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

And against whom is his mighty power directed? Against "*the beast* and *the false prophet*," and all those who act under their influence. And who is *the beast* here spoken of? Who is it that moves and actuates him—that gives him "his power, his seat, and his great authority?" It is "the dragon, that old serpent, called *the devil*, and *Satan*." (Rev. 13: 2.) Here, then, as in many other places, we find Christ heading his forces on the one side, and Satan his on the other. We find them standing one over against the other in the attitude of opposing leaders.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ, rather than God the Father, is leader of the sacramental host in the great conflict of which we speak, because of *his office and work as Mediator*. He now sits on a mediatorial throne; as mediator, he is king in heaven; all power is committed unto him both in heaven and on earth; he is head over all things in the church, and is represented in Scripture *as the Captain of Salvation*.

II. We inquire, secondly, as to *the scene, the theatre, the place* of the conflict between the Lord Jesus Christ and the powers of darkness. This is emphatically, *earth*. The struggle does not reach so high as heaven. It does not enter into and disturb that world of rest, of peace, of everlasting joy. We read, indeed, in the Revelations, of a "war in heaven;" but the heaven there spoken of is a mystical, symbolical heaven, and not the happy abode of the saints in light.

Nor does the conflict of which we are speaking extend properly to hell. That world is the prison of subdued rebels, where they are reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day; and not the place where they put on armor, and join battle, and contest the point for victory and glory. The scene of the conflict between the powers of light, and the powers of darkness, is emphatically *earth*. This world is the theatre of it. It is here that Satan has usurped his dominion, and set up his throne. It is the family of man that he claims as his vassals and victims. He vaunts himself as the

god of *this world.* It is to dispossess him of his usurped dominion, rescue his victims from between his teeth, and send him back, subdued and ashamed, to his prison in the world of fire, that the Lord Jesus Christ has put on his armor, and become the Captain of Salvation. Earth, then, is especially the scene of the conflict. It moves and deeply interests other worlds, but the *centre*, the *theatre* of it is here.

III. We inquire, in the third place, as to *the hosts engaged* in this conflict, under their respective leaders.

On the side of Satan, there are enlisted, first of all, a great multitude of *evil spirits*, like himself. All these spirits were once holy and happy in heaven. But they joined in the miserable revolt of their Prince, and fell with him under the power and the curse of sin.

These evil spirits are very numerous. "Our name is legion," said they on one occasion, "for *we are many.*" They are also subtle, malicious, and of great power. They are represented in the text, and in other places, as belonging to different ranks and orders. These are "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spirits of wickedness in high places." These spirits of darkness have long been permitted to roam the earth, to have access to the minds of men, to plot and scheme against the Church, and for a time to carry their diabolical schemes into execution. By the great majority of human beings, they have been not only served, but worshipped *as gods.* The things which the heathen sacrifice, all over the earth, "they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," 1 Cor. 10 : 20. These legions of fallen spirits constitute a material part of the host of their mighty leader.

The other part of Satan's host consists of *wicked men* here on the earth, and these constitute a vast multitude, divided into different classes, all trained and disciplined for their master's service. Here are hundreds of millions of pagan idolators, all the worshippers of devils, and all besotted in their delusions and sins. Here are millions upon millions of the votaries of the false prophet, whose eyes Satan has blinded, whose feet he has bound, and who are led captive by him at his will. Here are other millions of dispersed Jews, the inveterate enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Satan employs, in different parts of the earth, to promote his cause and injure the Church. Of the devotees of Rome there is a prodigious multitude—Pope, cardinals, priests, monks, crowned monarchs and sceptred kings, titled churchmen and degraded serfs, all enlisted and marshaled under the same great leader, and intent upon doing their master's work. Still nearer to us, Satan has his regiments of atheists and infidels, of scoffers and blasphemers, to whom he assigns an important part in this conflict, and who will deny him no service which it is in their power to bestow. He has, also, his *worldly* men, who love, pursue and extol the world, and exert an influence to draw all around them into its engulfing vortex. He has his *sensual* men—men of appetite and lust, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, who scorn to sin and die alone, but are intent upon destroying a multitude with them. He has

his *self-righteous* men—of sober face and proud heart, who believe themselves, and teach others, that persons of sober, honest life have no need of a Savior, and should never humble themselves to embrace him. In addition to all these, he has a band of masked *hypocrites*, who conceal their sins that they may the more successfully practise them;—and another band of *self-deceivers*, whom he has effectually blinded to their real characters, and is hurrying along to the judgment with a lie in their right hand. There are also the open denyers of God's essential truth—the propagators of "damnable heresies"—whom Satan persuades to reject doctrines which he believes himself, and to scoff at realities, under the torturing power of which he writhes and burns.

Such, in brief, are the hosts of the great adversary—the legions which he has at his control, and with which he has undertaken to wage conflict with the Son of God. Assuredly, his armies are great and terrible; and he is himself an enemy of prodigious power, whom no being in this world can prudently or safely despise.

On the side of the Son of God, and in opposition to Satan, there are, in the first place, legions of *holy angels*. These are a class of created spirits, superior to ourselves—of fervid love, of glowing intelligence, of burning zeal, of mighty power, who are represented as standing in the presence of God, and flying on his errands of mercy and of wrath. They are particularly conversant with the affairs of this world; are deeply interested in the great work of redemption; and have enlisted, with all their energies, in that mighty conflict between holiness and sin, of which earth is the principal theatre and object. They ascend and descend on the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. They conflict directly, as no other beings can, with the Prince and the powers of darkness. They are ministers of wrath and vengeance to hardened transgressors, as well as of comfort and deliverance to the oppressed children of God. When Lot was to be delivered, and Sodom destroyed; ministering angels were employed to effect both these objects. When an ungodly tyrant was about to invade and distress the Church, the angel of the Lord was sent into his camp, and 185,000 of his army fell in a single night. When Peter was shut up in prison, expecting in a few hours to be barbarously slain, an angel opens his prison doors, and conducts him in safety to his friends.

The number of the holy angels is immensely great, and they are all the devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They heralded his entrance into this world with songs of praise. They strengthened him during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. And now that he has ascended up on high, they wait his commands, and do his pleasure. They are to be ministering spirits to his Church, so long as it shall need their ministry on the earth. And in the consummation of all things, when the mystery of God shall be finished, they are to bring together his elect, from the one end of heaven to the other; and are to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire. The offices sustained by

the holy angels, the works done and to be done by them, sufficiently show that they constitute a material part of the host of the great Captain of our Salvation.

Another part of Christ's militant host consists of *his people*, in the present world. These, though in themselves weak, are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." They are represented in the scriptures as "*laborers together with Christ*," sustained and strengthened by his Holy Spirit, they "*have done* exploits," and they can do the same again. Through faith in their Divine Redeemer, they have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens." Under the protection of their great Captain, they are able to contend successfully "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spirits of wickedness in high places."

This part of the Redeemer's host, like that in the other world, consists of different ranks and orders. Some are leaders, standard-bearers; while others hold subordinate stations. Some can do one thing for their Divine Master, and some another. But all can effect *something* in the holy war. To each is committed *some* talent, which he is required and expected to improve; and in the improving of which he may aid materially in bringing the great conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, to a successful issue.

In speaking of the hosts engaged in this conflict, I have made no mention of those who have already departed this life. The holy dead are, indeed, the servants of Christ; but they are no longer his militant servants. They *rest* from their previous labors and warfare, and their works follow them. The sinful dead are, in like manner, the enemies of Christ. But they are subdued under his feet. They are no longer in a situation to contend against him, or to oppose the triumphs of his holy kingdom.

IV. We come now to the fourth and more important part of the subject—*the manner* in which the great conflict of which we have spoken is, at present, carried on.

On the part of Satan, it is carried on in various ways. It is carried on, in the first place, by *deception* and *falsehood*. Satan is called in Scripture "a liar, and the father of it;" and he has abundantly shown how well he deserves to bear these opprobrious epithets. He commenced his attack upon our first mother with a lie. He compassed his design upon her, by the grossest deception. And from that hour to the present, he has been carrying into effect his dreadful designs against the best interests of our race, by deception and falsehood. He deceives one person under this pretence, and another under that, and a third under something else. He persuades some, that there is no truth in the Bible—no God, no Savior, no heaven, no hell. He leads some to discard the essential doctrines of the Bible; so that while they profess to receive it in form, they reject it in fact. He even persuades

them to deny his own existence; quite willing, if they do but serve him well, that they should disbelieve that he is. To a numerous class of persons, he presents the world under the most alluring aspects; assures them that it is the great good; quickens them in the pursuit of it; immerses them in it; and thus cheats them to their final ruin. He flatters many with the prospect of long life, and much earthly enjoyment, leading them to say, with a sinner of old, "Soul, thou has much goods laid up in store for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry;" when God is saying to that soul, and verifying what he says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." If by no false suggestion, the great adversary can keep the deluded sinner quiet—if his attention becomes arrested and his heart distressed; he immediately undertakes to discourage him with difficulties, and to deter him from his object, by fictitious fears. 'Your sins are too great to be forgiven.' 'You have sinned away the day of grace.' 'If you undertake to become a Christian, you will never succeed. Better dismiss the perplexing subject; or at least delay it till a more convenient season.' Such are some of the malicious lies, with which Satan fills the minds of men here on earth. Such are some of the ways in which he carries on the dreadful conflict against them. O, that the simple children of men would no longer be duped and deluded by him! "In vain," says Solomon, "is the net spread in *the sight* of any bird." Yet the net of the fell destroyer *is* spread in the sight of the wayward children of men, and they fall into it, by hundreds and thousands.

Again; Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged by *direct temptation;* or by presenting motives before men to draw them into sin. In this dreadful business he has had long experience, and has acquired consummate skill. He has access to the minds of men; he knows their feelings, propensities, and habits; and he adapts his enticements to their circumstances, so as to give them the utmost power. Some he finds in such a state of mind, that he can easily draw them into the grossest vices, and plunge them into downright infidelity. Others, who have too much pride or self-respect to be ruined in this way, he easily engages in the pursuit of riches and honors, and thus effectually prevents them from securing their salvation. Those who have been religiously educated, and who retain some sense of the value and importance of religion, might not readily be brought to treat the subject with open scorn and contempt. Satan will hardly *try* them with a temptation such as this. But he *will* try to induce them to put the matter off, and in this stealthy but fatal endeavor he will be very likely to succeed. He finds some, whose feelings are so much engaged on the subject of religion, that it would be vain to attempt allaying them by ordinary inducements. But these can often be *diverted*, by artful methods, to their final ruin. Some seemingly harmless amusement is proposed; or some diverting book is thrown in their way; or some other temptation is presented which will be likely to take; and the poor soul *is* taken, and its ruin is sealed.

Satan has had much to do, during the last six thousand years, with

poor, frail, fallen human nature, and he knows it well. He knows the weak sides of men; knows all their exposed points; knows how, and where, and when to ply his darts, and when to desist. He will not be likely to attempt to do what he has every reason to suppose cannot be done. He will not be likely to shock individuals with suggestions, for which their minds are not prepared. He wields his weapons with consummate skill, and adapts his temptations to characters and circumstances, so as to give them the utmost power of which they are capable.

I remark again, that Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, not merely by personal efforts, or by agents from the invisible world, but by *appropriate instruments selected from among men.* I have remarked already, that a part of his host consists of wicked men here in this world. It may be added, that this is a very effective part. In ten thousand instances, men become the tempters and destroyers one of another. They consent to take the devil's work out of his own hands, and often perform it more effectually than he could himself.

Satan has fit instruments, in this world, for all sorts of mischief which he chooses to perpetrate. He sets one to this deed of darkness, and another to that. He employs this man to seduce and ruin souls in one way, and that in another. He has his preachers to publish his lies for him, to dress them up in the semblance of truth, and support them by all the learning and eloquence of which they are masters. He has his presses and periodicals, employed for the same diabolical purpose. He has the wealth of the world, in great measure, at his control, and he can pour it out with an exhaustless profusion, whenever any favorite object is thereby to be promoted. He contrives and directs the modes of education, in most countries, so as to lead the young immortal directly away from God, and fill his mind with errors and prejudices that will be likely to prove fatal to his soul. He stands at the fountain head of moral influence, and manages to control public opinion and public measures, in most instances, according to his will. In short, the pretence of Satan, to be the god of this world, is no vain boast. He is, and for thousands of years has been, to a great extent, *the god of this world.* He plans, and his subject vassals execute. He stands behind the scene, and manages the wires, and thousands, and tens of thousands, here in this world, move at his bidding, and obediently perform for him his work of death.

I remark farther, that Satan carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, by *corrupting and perverting the best things.* How often has he succeeded in corrupting the Church of God! The Church of Israel was established with great solemnity, by the patriarchs of the Jewish nation. It was furnished with inspired teachers, with direct revelations, with holy ordinances and institutions, and with all the requisite means of preserving itself pure. But yet how soon was it corrupted! And in process of time, how dreadfully corrupted! In the days of our Savior and his Apostles, it had become an engine of evil, rather

than of good; a means of promoting Satan's kingdom, rather than the kingdom of Christ.

At the ushering in of the new dispensation, the Church of God was purified. The unbelieving Jews were cut off, and the believing Gentiles soon to be grafted in. New revelations were made; new rites were instituted; more powerful Divine influences were bestowed; and it appeared, for a time, as though the Christian Church might be able to maintain its integrity. But soon, again, the great adversary got into the sheep-fold. The mystery of iniquity began to work. And it continued to work more and more, until the Christian community became almost entirely corrupted. It was so corrupted, that nothing remained to its living members but to separate themselves from the putrid mass, and re-organize the Church upon its primitive foundation.

Satan often contrives to pervert and destroy the good influence of the Church, by *intestine broils*. He foments divisions among its members, and sets them to biting and devouring one another; and thus, instead of carrying on the war against him, they essentially aid him in his dark designs.

There is nothing from which Satan has more to fear, than from *revivals of religion;* and there is nothing which he has more sedulously endeavored to corrupt. And in this attempt he has too often succeeded. In some instances, he has gone into the work himself; has actually turned revival preacher; and has soon changed the pure and healthful stream of revival influence into a turbid and poisonous current. The great revivals under the reformers were corrupted in this way. Fanatical individuals were stirred up, who, under the pretence of inspiration and perfection, introduced the most flagrant disorders, and involved all Germany in war. In the same way, the revivals in England, in the days of the Commonwealth, and in this country, at the time of Whitfield, were perverted, corrupted, and brought to a melancholy close. A fanatical spirit was awakened, extravagancies were encouraged, and prejudices were excited against all serious religion, which have continued to the present time.

The hand of the great adversary was never more visible, than in the transactions to which I here refer. One of the most effective methods, undoubtedly, of carrying on the conflict in which he is engaged, is by so perverting and corrupting the things of Christ, as to change their character, and mould them into a subserviency to his own designs. In this way, he enters, as it were, the Christian camp, wheels round the artillery of the Church, and discharges it in the face of those whom it was prepared and intended to defend.

I shall mention but another mode in which Satan carries on this conflict, and that is by *persecution*, *war*, and *blood*. If he can think of no other method of counteracting and defeating the people of God, and promoting his designs against them, he will (if possible) cut them off from the earth. This method was employed with terrible effect, in the early days of the Christian Church, when Pagan emperors and priests were let loose upon the defenceless disciples, and butchered

them without measure or mercy. And scarcely had the persecutions of Pagan Rome ceased, when those of Papal Rome commenced; and these have been continued even to our own times. The Papal harlot has been almost perpetually drunk with blood. The blood of myriads upon myriads of saints and martyrs, destroyed in some instances by the extremest tortures, cries in the ear of heaven against her.

And the blood of war has often been added to that of palpable persecution. The Hussites in Bohemia, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, were wasted and worn out by long and desolating religious wars. The Protestants in France could have no rest or peace, till by persecutions and wars the greater part of them were either slaughtered or driven into exile. The reformation in Germany was not finally established, until after the close of a thirty years' war. In the Netherlands, too, the reformed religion was not established, until the whole country had been drenched in blood. Nor is it likely that Satan has yet ceased to thirst for the blood of the saints, or that he has ceased to shed it. The prophecies rather indicate that, as the conflict between good and evil advances, and the contest thickens, deadly weapons will be again resorted to, and the struggle may end in blood. The Lord purify and prepare his Church for that trying and dreadful day!

I have thus exhibited, as fully as I am able in a single discourse, the *manner* in which Satan carries on his side of the conflict. Let us now turn over to the other side, and consider by what methods the great Leader of the sacramental host of God's elect opposes him.

Christ opposes the efforts of Satan and his legions, not by *annihilating* them. This he might do at a word. He made them out of nothing; he sustains them in existence every moment; and by simply withdrawing his supporting hand, he might suffer them to sink back into that nothing from which they came. But it does not comport with the purposes of our Divine Lord to treat his enemies after this manner. A victory obtained by such means would be unglorious, compared with that at which the Redeemer aims.

Neither, in opposing the efforts of Satan and his hosts, is it the plan of Christ immediately to *confine* them. They will be confined, at the appointed season. They will be placed in a situation where they can disturb the universe no more. But for the present, they are permitted to have their liberty—to pass to and fro in the earth—to roam up and down in it—for the TRIAL of the successive generations of men. *Their* temptations constitute a necessary part of *our trial*. And until this object is accomplished—until the generations of men have been sufficiently tried in this way, the present liberty of fallen spirits will not be restrained.

I remark again, Christ does not now oppose the efforts of Satan and his hosts, by performing *miracles*. He might crush them instantly and most effectually, in this way. At any point, and every point, he might hedge up their path, and defeat their designs, by the exertion of his omnipotent power. In the days of his flesh, our Savior often did control the malicious purposes of Satan, by his miracles. He ejected the

devils from many who were possessed with them, and delivered those whom Satan had bound. But at present, he has ceased to carry on the conflict after this manner. He prefers other methods of defeating his adversaries, and of fulfiling upon them the counsels of his will. Some of these methods will now be briefly pointed out.

As Satan operates, on his part, by deception and falsehood, our Savior opposes him by *publishing truth.* It was part of the object for which Christ came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth. He *did* bear witness to the truth. He has given to the world a whole volume of truth—truth attested by the highest evidence—truth enough to contradict and refute all the lies that Satan has ever uttered. To be sure, this truth is not uttered in such a way, that it cannot possibly be resisted. If persons are disposed to reject Christ's truth, and receive, in preference to it, the delusions of Satan; they *can*—they *must.* It is necessary to the purposes of their trial, that they should have as much liberty as this. Still, the truth of Christ is made so plain, that no one has the least occasion to mistake it. No one *can* mistake it, who is willing to deal honestly and faithfully with himself. When Satan suggests that there is no future life—no heaven to hope for, or hell to fear; Christ opposes him by *telling the truth.* When Satan persuades the delaying sinner, that life is long, that death is at a great distance, and that he has time enough yet to pursue his pleasures; Christ opposes him by *telling the truth.* When Satan would persuade the awakened sinner, that he has sinned away the day of grace; that his sins are so many and aggravated that they can never be forgiven; that there is now no hope in his case; Christ opposes him again by *telling the truth.* And so of all the other malicious falsehoods of the adversary. To his falsehoods, Christ opposes his own truth. To be sure, this truth may be rejected, and the lie believed; still, Christ does not, on this account, desist from his great purpose of holding up the truth.

Again, as Satan operates by presenting, with much skill and power, tempting, seducing motives to the minds of men; so Christ opposes him, by presenting *other motives;*—by setting at work other and counteracting influences. The motives of the Gospel are intrinsically of great power. I see not how they could have been made more powerful, and still have been adapted to the circumstances of beings on trial. They address themselves to the understandings and feelings of men; to their reason and conscience; to their hopes and fears, and sympathies; indeed, to every principle of holy action within them. These various motives are all in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ; and by him are faithfully presented and powerfully urged. In point of intrinsic weight and strength, they as much overbalance all that Satan can offer, as a mountain outweighs a feather. And yet, so strangely perverted is the natural mind of man—so deranged and blunted are all the nobler sensibilities of the soul, that Satan gains a hearing more readily than Christ. His motives are yielded to, while Christ's are re-

jected. Men carelessly turn away from the great Deliverer, and consent to be led captive by the Destroyer at his will.

I remark farther, that as Satan accomplishes much by his instruments, so Christ, in opposing him, employs on a large scale the *instrumentality of others.* He employs all the countless myriads of the holy angels. Some of these are of equal power with Satan himself; and are as much skilled in doing good, as he is in the arts of wickedness. These legions of angels are all subject to the Mediatorial reign of Christ. They are all of them his devoted and delighted servants. They fly on his errands from world to world, and aid him in his mighty conflict against the Prince and the powers of darkness.

Associated with them in the same employment, are Christ's faithful people here on the earth. And I have often thought, my Christian friends, that we never, in this life, approach so near to the angels, and become so much like them, as when we co-operate with them in works of benevolence, and in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ. The faithful pastor, as he stands on his watch-tower, and gives to the gospel trumpet a certain sound; or as he goes from house to house among the people of his charge, inculcating truth, administering consolation, warning and teaching every man;—the self-denying missionary, plying his labor of love among the degraded heathen, endeavoring to open the long sealed eye, and pour the balm of heavenly comfort into the stupid, vacant heart;—the Sabbath-school teacher, diligently instructing and watching over his class;—the female tract distributor, flitting from house to house, bearing her little winged messenger of mercy;—the pious mother, patiently toiling for her children, directing their infant minds, and endeavoring to train them up for God;—the steadfast, devoted Christian, standing ever in his lot, exhibiting a holy, consistent example, letting his light shine, doing good to all men as he has opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith;—all these, and others like them, seem to me to be but little lower than the angels, and to be *very like* them in the character of their pursuits. They belong, with them, to the same host of the great Captain of Salvation, and are employed, as instruments, in advancing the same cause, and carrying forward to its termination the same spiritual conflict.

Christ carries on this conflict, in part, by his *providential arrangements.* But it is remarkable that, in these arrangements, he does not aim at immediately and totally crushing his adversary. This he might do, at any time, with the utmost ease. But for the *trial* of the successive generations of men, he permits Satan and his legions to live and to act, to form plans and to carry them into execution, until a fair experiment of wickedness has been made, and until some special interposition in Providence is needed, to secure the safety of his Church. Thus, in the antediluvian world, Christ lengthened out the chain of Satan, and permitted him to carry into effect his designs, till the Church of God was all but extinct; and then, by one dreadful stroke, he frustrated and destroyed the works of his adversary, and emptied the earth of those hardened rebels who had so long ravaged and corrupted it.

And so in Egypt, he suffered Satan to prosper, and wickedness to triumph, till both his people and their oppressors had been sufficiently tried; and then, by a succession of awful providences, he humbled his enemies, and delivered his Church. And so in the days of Mordecai, Christ bore with the enemies of his people, till their diabolical designs were all but accomplished, and his Church was brought to the brink of ruin; and then he interposed, in a most remarkable manner, and turned their weapons against themselves.

These instances illustrate the manner in which Christ often conflicts with his proud adversary, by means of providential arrangements. It need never discourage the people of God, to see wickedness prospering, and Satan triumphing for a season. Their Lord permits this, for their *trial;* and for the trial of all concerned. He designs, in this way, to try the faith of his people, to teach them their dependence, and excite them to more earnest prayer. In this way, also, he displays his grace and his power, and renders the interpositions of his hand more conspicuous and glorious.

I remark once more, Christ carries on the conflict in which he is engaged, by the *power* and *influence of the Holy Spirit.* But this influence is not exerted to the full extent, and with all the efficiency, of which it is capable. Christ might, by his Spirit, convert the hearts of all men, and perfectly sanctify them, and thus end the conflict at a stroke. But such an exercise of power would hardly consist with the probation of men. It would not consist with those designs which God is pursuing in reference to this world. But Christ *is* sending his Spirit to give energy and efficacy to the truths of his gospel, to *that* extent, and in all those instances, which will be, in the end, most glorious to himself. By his Spirit, Christ is continually defeating and weakening his adversary, and often in such ways as are peculiarly annoying to him. Thus when, by much pains-taking, and a long process of diabolical influence, Satan has trained up an individual, and fitted him to do him service; Christ often sends his Spirit, and converts that individual, and enlists all his powers for the promotion of his own kingdom. Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus, with Augustine of Hippo, with Luther the reformer, with John Bunyan, John Newton, and many others. Those individuals, from whom Satan had expected the most eminent service, have in numerous instances, by the power of the Spirit, been taken from him, and been made the most distinguished instruments of promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ.

Revivals of religion are generally so ordered—perhaps they always are—as to be not only most glorious to the Savior, but most perplexing to his great Adversary. When, by much contrivance and labor, Satan has brought about such a state of things in a church or a town, that error has become popular, and vice and wickedness seem likely to prevail—when the hearts of God's people are distressed, and they have no resource but to cast themselves directly on the power and mercy of their heavenly Father; it is then, in most instances, that the Holy Spirit is sent; the ranks of the enemy are broken; his designs are frus-

trated; and those on whom he had chiefly relied to perpetrate his works of mischief, are often brought into the kingdom of Christ. So commonly has this representation been verified, that it has come to be a maxim, in the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, that "the darkest time in the night is just before the dawn of day." In a word, by his alliance with the Holy Spirit, Christ has all the resources of heaven at his control. He wields a power, before which Satan and all his legions are but worms. He is able to take the prey from the mighty, and to deliver the captives of the terrible one, till infinite wisdom and goodness have said, *It is enough.*

Having thus pointed out the manner in which this great conflict, on both sides, is carried on, I proceed, lastly, to notice its *issues* and *results.* What is to be the *end* of it, and what the *consequences*, to either party.

The issue of the great conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, the Prince of peace and the powers of hell, cannot be doubtful. It is clearly disclosed to us in the Bible; and might be satisfactorily anticipated, even if the Bible had not revealed it. This conflict has now been carried on, with varied success and prospects, for thousands of years. It will still continue, for a little season. It will thicken, and wax more portentous and dreadful, as it verges to its termination. Satan will come out in unwonted wrath, when it comes to be evident that his time is short. But he will, at length, be utterly defeated and ruined.

He will first be defeated on his own chosen ground—the ground of *earth.* This earth shall be taken from him, and given, for a long period, to Christ and his people. "The kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfiled." This is the *first* defeat of Satan; his first effectual confinement and exclusion from wasting and desolating the earth. His *final* defeat and overthrow are deferred for a little season.

Having been loosed from his prison at the close of the Millenium, that another experiment might be made of the dreadful evil of sin, and of what the human heart is capable, and having gathered the wicked nations together, in number as the sand of the sea, against the camp of the saints and the beloved city; suddenly *fire descends from God out of heaven, and devours them all.*

The end of all things earthly is now come. The devil, that deceived the nations, is finally taken, and "cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Rev. 20: 10.

Such is the termination of the great conflict between the Prince of light, and the powers of darkness, in reference to this world. It ends

in the utter defeat and overthrow of Satan, and all his host, and all those who have been leagued and confederated with him. They are sent away accursed to the prison of despair. They are placed in a situation where they can plot against God and his people, and disturb the order and happiness of holy beings, no more forever.

The results of the great conflict to Christ and his Church, will be most triumphant and glorious. Christ must reign on his Mediatorial throne, till he has put all enemies under his feet; and when this is done, he will stand forth before the created universe, in the height of his power, and in the brightness of his glory. He will be seen to be "exalted, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come."

Christ's triumph over the principalities and powers of darkness will be the more glorious, because it is a *moral* triumph, accomplished, not by physical omnipotence, but chiefly by spiritual influences and moral means. It will be the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over falsehood, of right and equity over treason and rebellion, of holiness over sin. It will display, in the brightest manner, the transcendent glories of the Savior; while it will rescue a great multitude which no man can number from the tyranny and slavery of sin and Satan, and make them the eternal trophies of his victorious grace. It will restore the disturbed, the broken order of the universe, and place things in a situation, both in the worlds below, and the worlds above, where they may move on without change, without interruption forever. Those that are holy will be holy still, and those that are filthy will be filthy still. The happiness of heaven will never be interrupted, and the fires of hell will never cease.

In short, the results of the great conflict, which we have considered, will be most honorable to the Savior, and satisfactory in the highest degree, to all his friends. On the other hand, these results will be most humiliating, mortifying, desolating, terrible, to the whole company of his final enemies. They will be involved in a defeat from which they can never rise; in an overthrow and ruin irretrievable and eternal.

REFLECTIONS.

1. It follows from what has been said, that those are in a great error, who deny the existence and agency of fallen spirits. The persons who make this denial do it under the impression, that the doctrine of fallen spirits—of a literal devil and his angels, is *unreasonable.* But I can see nothing unreasonable in this doctrine. It certainly is not unreasonable that God should create spirits; for he is "the Father of *our* spirits." Neither is it unreasonable that he should create spirits of a higher order than ourselves, and not encumbered, as we are, with gross material bodies. Nor is it unreasonable that he should make these higher spirits free moral agents, and put them on trial, and

that, in the progress of their trial, some of them should be left to abuse their free agency, and fall into sin. And yet such an act would constitute them *fallen spirits;* just what we suppose the devil and his angels to be.

And as there is nothing unreasonable in the doctrine of fallen spirits, so (as every reader of the Bible knows) it is *abundantly scriptural.* I need not quote passages in proof of this declaration. It would be just as easy to prove, from the language of the Bible, that there is a devil, as that there is a God. The Scriptures speak as expressly, and well nigh as often, of fallen wicked angels, as they do of wicked men.

Nor is this all that requires to be said on the subject. The history of our world is a full and continual illustration of the reality and power of Satanic influence. Man being what he now is, there would have been wickedness on earth, much wickedness, if there was no devil. But we see something besides mere wickedness here. We see *organized, systematized* wickedness. We see far-reaching, wide-spreading *schemes* of wickedness, which tell of an authorship vastly superior to our own. We see a conflict carried on against God and his Christ—one of long standing, and of prodigious extent—which, though it engrosses millions of hearts, and employs millions of hands, is yet manifestly under the direction of some one mighty, malignant spirit, who skilfully plans what his numberless vassals execute, and controls the springs which move the whole machinery of human rebellion and sin. In short, the book of providence, not less than that of revelation, proclaims the existence and agency of fallen spirits. The doctrine can no more be eradicated or explained away from the one of these volumes, than from the other.

2. It may easily be accounted for, in view of what has been said, that this world should be an object of intense and absorbing interest to the higher orders of intelligent creatures. That it *is* so, the Scriptures positively assert; and that it should be so, is not at all unaccountable or wonderful. Here sin entered. Here the kindness and love of a Father were repaid by the unnatural rebellion of an entire family. And here the great Son of God appeared, to perform the most astonishing of all his works—the work of our redemption. Here he lived and labored, suffered, bled, and died. And now that he has risen from the dead, and ascended upon high, earth has become the theatre of a conflict between the powers of light, and the powers of darkness, which moves and interests the universe. Satan is here contending, with all his legions, for the maintenance of his usurped dominion; and the Lord Jesus Christ, with his legions, is contending to dethrone him, and put an end to his dark and bloody empire over the world. While this conflict is going on—a conflict which moves all heaven and hell—no wonder that earth, the theatre of it, should be an object of intense interest to surrounding intelligences. No wonder that, with the utmost solicitude, their eyes should be turned downward upon this little world,

tracing the course and watching the progress, of events which are occurring here.

3. In view of what has been said, it becomes all who hear me to inquire, and to do it with deep searchings of heart, *Who is on the Lord's side?* It is a solemn thought, that in the great conflict of which I have spoken, every individual present is actively engaged, *somehow, somewhere.* Yes, every one now before me—every one on the face of the earth—is an enlisted soldier in this warfare, and is really laboring, either to build up the cause of Christ and pull down that of Satan, or to build up the cause of Satan and pull down that of Christ. My dear friends, where and how do we labor? On which side are we? We all know on which side we *ought* to be? On which side *are* we?

We profess, many of us, to be on the Lord's side; and I hope and trust that this profession is sincere. But let us look frequently and closely to this matter. Let us not be deceived. And if we are indeed on the Lord's side, let us maintain our position there *steadfastly* and *consistently.* It is one of the artifices of Satan, we have seen, to corrupt the things of Christ, and pervert them, if possible, to his own use. Not unfrequently, he corrupts and perverts, in this way, the people of God. He so far misleads them, and turns them aside, as to bring them into a subserviency to his own designs. They labor for *him* more than for Christ, and promote his cause more than that of their own master. My Christian brethren, my *ministerial* brethren, let us be watchful and prayerful in reference to this matter. We ought not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. How dreadful to be so deceived and corrupted by him, that we shall (perhaps without intending it) do more hurt than good in the world—more to pull down, than build up, that holy cause, to which our lives are professedly consecrated!

There are some who hear me who know that they are not on the Lord's side. They know that they have not enlisted under the banner of Christ, and consecrated and devoted themselves to his service. But if you are not on the Lord's side, my friends, where are you? If you do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, who do you serve? Remember, there is no neutrality in this conflict. "He that is not with me," saith Christ, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." If, then, you are not on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, you certainly are on the side of the Adversary. If you serve not the glorious Prince of peace, you certainly serve the Wicked One. He may not employ you to perform the more shameful, the more disgraceful parts of his service. He may employ you in such ways—you may do his work so smoothly and genteelly, that you flatter yourselves you are not doing it at all. But be not deceived. If you are not laboring for Christ, you certainly are laboring for his great Adversary *somehow;* and persisting in such labors, you must perish with the Master you have served.

My dear friends, I warn you of these things in season. I earnestly call upon you to change your relations. Why should you continue in the service of the most wicked, the most hateful, the most wretched

being in the universe? Why should you league yourselves to one, whose cause is not only most base and odious, but *utterly desperate;* one who is destined to such a speedy and terrible overthrow?

My friends, let me show you a better Master;—One all wise, all benevolent and holy, "the chiefest among ten thousands and altogether lovely;"—One who has loved *you* and died for you;—One who pities and deplores your case;—One who now stands before you with open arms, waiting to receive you to his bosom and his love;—One who shall speedily and assuredly triumph over all his adversaries—whose kingdom shall survive all other kingdoms, and abide forever. Shall not this Master be *your* Master? Shall not his service be *your* service? Will you not abjure and renounce forever the hard service of Satan, and enlist under the banner of the Son of God? O yes, my friends; from the heart say, *yes.* Come, enter here, at once, into the service of Christ. Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him; for his yoke is easy, and his burthen is light.

CONVICTION AND CONVERSION.

"The Bible most distinctly and emphatically declares it to be the natural tendency of all our hearts to lead us away from God. There is a natural alienation of the heart from God. There is no feeling of attachment to him, no wish for his favor, no realizing sense of guilt, no desire for his forgiveness, no longing for reconciliation,—no peace, no real happiness. Each is out upon a sea without chart or compass or pilot, at the mercy of any winds or any currents which may press upon his frail bark. A strong, but unseen current is drifting one towards the rocks and whirlpools of vice and crime, another to the cold, bleak, iron-bound shore of infidelity; a third is trimming his sails to the gales of pleasure, skimming merrily along over hidden rocks and treacherous shoals; and thus all, though going in different directions, and with different apparent prospects, are alike in this most important respect;—they are drifting away from God, and in danger of swift destruction in one form or another. Such is the condition of every individual of the human family—such his danger and such his fate, unless an arm of mercy is extended for his rescue.

The modes by which God effectually awakens the soul are infinitely varied. One is arrested in his course of sin by a sermon, after having heard sermons just as faithful and just as able, for twenty years, without effect; another by a brother's or a sister's faithful conversation. Here is one who fled to God as a refuge in an hour of sickness or danger;—there is another who was drawn by affliction;—by the loss of a parent or a husband or a child; a third is gradually awakened by reading books of religious controversy, or by conversation on controverted points; a fourth is led to God by the profuseness of his worldly favors, showing that the world cannot satisfy, and a fifth, by the last, affecting farewell of a dying friend.

A mother's or a father's or a teacher's early lessons have often made an impression, which after years could never fully wear away. The effect may be concealed. The face may wear the look of indifference, and the whole conduct evince entire unconcern, and yet, the impression remain indelible upon the heart. A sense of unfitness to meet God, a feeling of guilt and danger, a consciousness that the world could never really satisfy, will hang over the soul, bringing many an hour of despondency and gloom, and calling the individual to give up his sins and make his peace with God. Reader, is it not so with you? Have you not learned truths which you cannot forget? Have you not received impressions during any of the long years of your past life, which you never can efface? Do not thoughts of God, of your duty, and of your approaching account, intrude themselves often into your heart, and render you restless and unhappy? It is the voice of God, calling you to renounce a life of sin and inquietude for the peace and happiness which flow from union and friendship with Him.

How many ways has God of calling his children to himself. Every way, in fact, by which the heart may be touched at all, he makes use

of to touch it with a sense of sin. He devises a thousand modes of calling men to him, and inducing them to accept of his love. Remember then, fellow traveler to eternity, whatever your grief, whatever your care, whatever may be the burden of pain or distress or anxiety, which you bear about with you, it may be the means which God is taking to bring you to himself. And, on the other hand, whatever may be your joy, whatever worldly peace and prosperity may attend you, it may be the means which God is taking, to win your heart to him.

Most persons find a considerable and a protracted struggle in their hearts, before they are willing to give themselves up fully to God. Their distress is of a complicated character. Many different feelings enter into the composition of it. First, there is the fear of future punishment. This feeling, however, though it is sometimes powerful in its influence, is usually less so than others, and is commonly soon absorbed in deeper emotions which follow, especially the sense of guilt. The individual has known that he has been a sinner for a long time, but now he *feels* it. His past iniquities arise to his view and oppress him with an indescribable gloom. His spirits sink, his cheeks grow pale, a deep dejection settles upon his countenance, and upon his heart. Sins, which, when he committed them, gave him no concern, now come up to mind, displaying themselves in their real magnitude, and arrayed in their own dismal colors. Everything looks dark and gloomy. The mind always tinges with its own light, all that it looks upon, and the whole creation appears gloomy to him who is sad at heart. His business has no longer any interest for him; enterprise has lost its charm, and the world its value, and he comes out on the brightest and happiest looking morning of the year, weighed down by an almost insupportable burden, under the influence of which, life seems a weary load, and all nature is dressed in colors of indescribable gloom.

He seems to be without a refuge too. He knows that God is merciful, but he cannot feel that there is any mercy for him. Besides, miserable and wretched as he is, he does not feel quite ready to give up everything for God. His heart still lingers around sin, although he sees it is the tyrant which is scourging him. Again, he has no clear view of a Savior. He has heard about Christ from his infancy, but he knows nothing about him. He has listened to sermon after sermon upon the way of salvation by a Redeemer, but they have made no impression, and he gropes about in the dark, seeking some one to lead him to a Savior crucified for his sins, just as if he had never heard of him before.

There is nothing more striking in the moral history of a human soul, than this fact which seems to be a universal one, that it is almost impossible to lead men to distinct apprehensions of a Savior, till they actually feel the need of him. Explain the way of salvation clearly, to persons who are unconcerned and careless in their sins, and it produces no effect. They see not, neither hear, nor know. Blind to their sins, they are blind to the nature of the provisions for their pardon, and it is

not till they feel the one, that they seem capable at all of appreciating the other. This is the great cause of the difference of opinion which prevails among nominal Christians in respect to the character of Christ, and the plan of salvation. Men who are not awakened to a sense of their sins, cannot see or feel the necessity of a Savior. Whether they hear the Savior preached or not, they can know no more of him while they live unconcerned in sin, than a man can know of the nature and value of food, until he has been hungry. And thus it is that in almost all cases, after groping in the dark for some time, bearing about the intolerable burdens of guilt, the soul at last finds in the Bible, or in some religious book, or in the conversation of some Christian friend, the way to the Savior, as the great sacrifice for sin. Then light comes in. The burden falls off. The gloomy clouds which have hung in such deep and heavy masses over the soul, are broken up and move slowly away,—the beams of the sun of righteousness pour in; and the soul which was before overwhelmed with sorrow and anxiety, and seemingly hopeless gloom, now finds itself reposing peacefully and quietly in light and joy and submission, feelings so far transcending the happiness to be derived from any earthly source, that they can be conceived only by those who have enjoyed them. All nature seems changed, for, as in the other case, the mind tinges with its own light all that it looks upon. The landscape and the sky beam with new splendors; the world looks bright and lovely. God, reconciled through his Son, is seen in everything. There is a new delight in prayer; the services in the house of God awaken new interest and pleasure; even the voice of the preacher and the sound of the music is changed, and every page in the word of God beams with a meaning and a beauty, never seen before. Then, for the first time, does the soul fully realize the meaning of the words, "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new."

It is not always the case that the essential feelings accompanying moral renewal appear in so marked and striking a form as here described. These feelings exist in various degrees, and connected alternating with other feelings. In some instances, the anxiety for the salvation of the soul, instead of being concentrated upon a single month or week, is distributed over a long period, perhaps many years. Sometimes the Savior is found not by some sudden apprehension of the plan of salvation through him, but by slow and faltering steps. One temporary glimpse is followed by a return of darkness and fears. Another hour of light and joy succeeds; and again gives way to one of sorrow. Thus there is variety without end, in respect to the ways in which the heart is led, but still, there is in all of them, substantial agreement in respect to the nature of the change."

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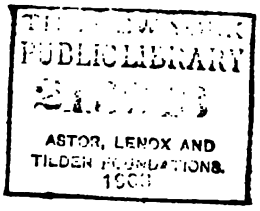
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CONTENTS OF VOL. XVIII.

SERMON	PAGE
CCCLXIV.—The Great Timekeeper.....By Rev. Horace Bushnell,	1
CCCLXV.—On Dancing .....By Rev. Albert Barnes,	10
CCCLXVI.—The World subdued by Faith.....By Nicholas Murray, D.D.,	25
CCCLXVII.—Truth and its Triumphs .....By Rev. N. W. Fisher,	34
CCCLXVIII.—The Long Suffering of God .....By Rev. Wm. S. Tyler,	49
CCCLXIX.—Faults in Prayer ..... By Rev. Jas. W. McLane,	63
CCCLXX.—The Lessons of Calamity .....By Rev. Wm. R. Williams,	73
CCCLXXI.—Rewards and Punishments.....	93
CCCLXXII.—Death Dreadful to the Ungodly.....By Rev. Anson Rood,	97
CCCLXXIII.—The Divine Method of Raising Charitable Contributions. By Rev. Elisha Yale, D.D.,	106
CCCLXXIV.—The Salvation of the Gospel great, not to be neglected with impunity.....By Rev. Jno. M. Whiton,	115
CCCLXXV.—The Strength of Christian Charity...By Rev. Geo. W. Bethune,	121
CCCLXXVI.—The Lamentation.....	139
Nearness of Death.....	144
CCCLXXVII.—Wisdom and Folly.....By Rev. Heman Humphrey, D.D.,	145
CCCLXXVIII.—The Guilt of Continued Impenitence. By Rev. Mark Tucker, D.D.,	152
The Family Revival.....	164
Profession of Religion.....	167
Death.....	168
CCCLXXIX.—The Social Prayer Meeting.....By Rev. Edwin F. Hatfield,	169
CCCLXXX.—The Duty of Christian Joy.....By Rev. Edwin Hall,	182
The Nature of Sin.....	190
CCCLXXXI.—The Woman of Samaria.....By Rev. Joel Hawes, D.D.,	193
CCCLXXXII.—The Blessings of the Gospel to the Poor. By Rev. Geo. W. Eaton,	202
The Self-Flattery of Sinners.....	213
Wants of the Soul.....	216
CCCLXXXIII.—The Missionary Enterprise Dependent on the Religion of Principle for Success.....By Rev. Albert Barnes,	217
CCCLXXXIV.—The Law of Grace in the Bestowment of "The Increase," considered in its application to Christians. By Rev. Samuel T. Spear,	241
CCCLXXXV.—Experience in the Ministry.....By Rev. Nathaniel Bouton,	250
CCCLXXXVI.—The Spontaneousness of Christian Duty. By Rev. Elam Smalley,	265
CCCLXXXVII.—The Blessed Consequence of Repentance. By Rev. John Richards,	278

adjusted the system, on purpose to make it present a succession of times and seasons,—that his very object was, among other things, to surround us with ever-circling periods of change, going and returning, going and returning, and giving us note, by their perpetual transitions, of the transit of time. These changes of days and nights, seasons and years, are the hands that move on the dial-plate of the universe. Here the flow of time is made visible, here it is measured and told.

I design to occupy my discourse, this morning, in pointing out the moral advantages of this arrangement, and deriving a lesson of wisdom from it. This whole system of things, my hearers, is a RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE, and is built to serve the ends, not less of our spiritual, than of our mortal nature. And, if we examine it as such, we shall find it filled with the proofs of Divine Love, and the admonitions of Divine Faithfulness. What then are the objects, or benefits, God intends to secure for us, in the arrangements just named? I answer—

1st. That by this means he compels men, as far as they can be compelled, to reckon their time, or number their days aright. Nothing is more important to the moral benefit of man, than that he be made to have his end before him, and see it as near at hand as it is. Death is the only argument which cuts off delay, and brings the motives of religion to bear on the *present* time. This only it is, which sobers life and brings the matter of eternity to have a real and influential existence. When we number our days aright, and only then, do we ever apply our hearts unto wisdom. And, therefore, it is a great end to be secured in God's gracious arrangements, that man should be as constantly and as powerfully impressed, as possible, with the flight of time, and the shortness of his stay here. And the more so, that he is so apt, by nature, to procrastinate—so apt to measure the period of life that remains, by the desire he feels of living, by the worldly plans he has laid out for the future, and the worldly hopes he has yet to realize.

Suppose, then, that God had so cast the arrangements of our system, as never to give notice, at all, of the passage of time, by the distinction of days, seasons and years. In that case, we should all be living on together, but, how fast, or how slow, we could scarcely guess. There being no natural measure of time, there would probably be no artificial measure of it. We should never know, in years and days, how long we had lived; we should only be able to compare ourselves with other men and determine, each, that he was born before, or after, or simultaneously, with some other. But if the question were, how long we have lived, we should have no answer, except as we frame some loose impression, by our inward judgment. And how poor a reliance this would be, we see from the change men undergo in their impressions of the rapidity of time.—One year of their childhood seems as long to them, they say, as two, or perhaps even ten years, later in life. This shows you how they would mistake, if there were no measure of time save that of their inward judgment. They would never realize how fast they are living. They would take the period equal to ten years, in the later portion of life, to be the same period which constituted

only its tenth part, in their childhood; and so, when drawing on towards the close of their days,—the very time when they ought most of all to be awake to the shortness of their stay,—then would they be, most of all, insensible to the flight of time, and the swift approach of eternity. All this, on the supposition that they were perfectly honest inquirers, and were carefully endeavoring to reckon their days rightly. But this, we know, is not true of men. They shun this reckoning. They are fond of life, they have plans laid out for many years, and have a thousand fond hopes, which they must realize. The shortness of their time, therefore, is an unwelcome truth. They will not believe it, if they can put it by. With such a disposition, how distant would they set the hour of their death; how completely would they deceive themselves, if there were nothing to sway their impressions, more than what we have supposed.

Observe, then, the faithfulness of God. He has made the very universe to be the clock of the universe, and admonish every mortal heart of the sure and constant passage of time. We are not left to our inward judgments. Time has its measures without, in the most palpable and impressive visitations of the senses. Every twilight tells us that a day is gone, and that by a sign as impressive as the blotting out of the sun! It is as if we had a clock, so adjusted as to give notice of the hour, by displacing, at a stroke, the light of heaven, suspending the labors of the world, quenching the fevers of its earthly schemes and passions, and diffusing an opiate spell of oblivion over all human consciousness. The impalpable odors of the spring penetrate our secret sense, as monitors of time. The summer heat is the heat of time, the winter's cold is the cold of time—both forcing their way into our experience by a visitation that we cannot resist. One season tells us that another is gone; and, when the whole circle of seasons is completed and returned into itself, the new year tells us that the old is gone. And a certain number of these years, we know, is the utmost bound of life. How sure is the reckoning. It is even compulsory—none can escape it. All things, in fact, swim round us and above, in circling motions, and these all are but so many measures of time, so many voices telling us of its flight. Our very business, our day's works, our pay days, the term of our stocks and contracts, is made to be impossible, without reminding us that days, months, years are passing away, and bringing us nearer to our eternal account. If the years fly swiftly and still more swiftly, we yet know that they are years. They will not prolong themselves to the satisfaction of our judgment. If we try to avoid the reckoning, they will not stop. If we have spent them in folly and neglect of God, they still whirl on their flight. If life is fading to a close, and the sentence of God's displeasure waiting to receive us, they will not slacken their steady and determined rolling. And thus you see that God has built the very frame of creation to warn and keep you warned of the flight of time. Your stay here was to be short, and he has thrown all things round you into visible transit, that you may *see the time pass* and have your eternity ever in view. To accomplish so

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SERMON CCCLXIV.

BY REV. HORACE BUSHNELL.

PASTOR OF THE NORTH CHURCH, HARTFORD.

THE GREAT TIME-KEEPER.

"And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and years."—Gen. i. 14

The system of the universe has two great features or elements of contrariety, which are made to subsist together in beautiful order and harmony. It is, on the one hand, a system of the most perfect stability, in which all the parts stand firm from age to age, accomplishing their daily revolutions with such undeviating exactness, that science will foretell their places for millions of years. On the other hand, it is a system of ever-circling changes, in which the days and nights, the seasons and the years, are flying round and round us, in quick succession.

Now God might have made a universe, so as to exhibit nothing but permanence and stability; a motionless universe, in which all the parts should stand still on their centre of rest, without any variety of times or seasons. Or, adopting our present solar system, if he had introduced only two very slight modifications in the position and motions of our planet, which I will not stay to describe, the system would have been, as regards us, a system without times and seasons, and probably we should never have been aware of any motion in it. Summer, autumn, winter, spring, completing what we call a year, would be unknown—we should have no notion of a year. One side of the earth would be a perpetual day, the other a perpetual night, and uninhabitable. We should have, in fact, no distinctions of time whatever, and no measure of time, except in the successions of our thoughts and experiences. Life would stretch on, as it were, in one straight continuous road, under the same never-setting noonday sun, from the cradle to the grave. The universe would be a clock, without either hands or bell, and the wheels would roll away under their unlettered dial-plate as rapidly as now, measuring off to man the times they conceal from his knowledge.

There was, doubtless, some reason, why God did not thus constitute our system, and my text discloses that reason. It tells us that God

adjusted the system, on purpose to make it present a succession of times and seasons,—that his very object was, among other things, to surround us with ever-circling periods of change, going and returning, going and returning, and giving us note, by their perpetual transitions, of the transit of time. These changes of days and nights, seasons and years, are the hands that move on the dial-plate of the universe. Here the flow of time is made visible, here it is measured and told.

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desirable, so benevolent an end, he has made the sun and moon to roll on their courses, and the whole order of heavenly motions to be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.

You have now just completed another of these years. How swiftly do they fly! how soon will they bear you away! Try not to close your eyes to a fact, which God has been at so much pains to impress upon you. You are now nearer, by another year, to eternity and the judgment-bar of God. If you have a strong desire of life, try not to force an opinion of your stay, against the sun and the signs of heaven. If your last year has been one of success, it has nevertheless been a year, and you are nearer by a year to your everlasting state. If your means of earthly enjoyment have been enlarged, your time of earthly enjoyment is diminished. If you have great plans yet to mature, you have one year less to do it in, and if you should expect to live as long as your hopes tempt you, the years will not take counsel of your hopes. If you are a Christian, have you had the year's growth of a Christian? If you are not, then have you lost a year! and by so much have diminished the prospect of your salvation. If you are an old man, without God, and the year has gone too quickly by, it has yet gone! the sun has not slackened his pace because he must bring you so much nearer to your end. If you are young, the Holy Spirit has given you one more year of mercy, and it may be the last! I say to you, one and all, my friends, give heed to this reckoning. The sun has returned into his circle, the great bell of time has struck! another year is gone!

2. It is another benefit of God's arrangements, in the astronomical motions and the seasons, that he may call us often to a reckoning with ourselves, and that under the most impressive influences. Were there no distribution of times and seasons, no complete periods, we should have no past times completed to think of. We could never say, as the sun goes down, and the light fades into darkness—"Another day is gone!" Or, when the year returns to its goal—"Another year is gone!" We should only slide along in a silent, stealthy motion, and time would slide as silently by in undiscriminated periods. And how should we hold ourselves to a reckoning for that which has no distinct existence in our thoughts?

But now time reels itself away in definite measures and complete circles. The sun returns to his place, and says to all that live—I have given you now another year. The conscience hears his report, and says—What now have I done with this year? A kind of general instinct moves us to a reckoning with ourselves. The merchant and the banker go into account with themselves, and foot up the results of the year. The husbandman computes the yield of his harvest. Mistakes in plan, deficiencies of industry and attention, misapplications of effort, are brought into view and corrected. Now, too, the immortal nature speaks, and the claims of wisdom force themselves into view. Something within calls us to a reckoning. One more year of accountability to God is gone, and its record is sealed!

What man among us will refuse this reckoning? What minister

will neglect to ask what he has been doing in his Master's vineyard—to go over the record of his doings and neglects—to thank God for his successes, and repent of his deficiencies? What Christian will shun the serious and faithful review of his conduct—his use or abuse of God's privileges—try himself by his professions—sum up his charities given and withheld—refresh himself in the review of his hours of Christian peace and enjoyment of God—and bow himself in contrition for his sins against the Holy Spirit? Now, too, is the heedless man, the impenitent worldling summoned to a pause. The voice of immortality speaks. He is one year nearer to the result of that great experiment which is called life. A year of giddiness, vanity, avarice, possibly of conscious striving against God, has finished its circle. The law of God has been over it, and His eye has followed it. Oh! to have passed a year of accountability to God, and to see and feel that he is pressing so much nearer to the confines of his immortality! What has he done? Whither is he going? Stay, immortal man! Go by thyself, and reckon with thy God! Answer for this year! Or, if thou canst not answer, bow thy head in sorrow, and cast thyself on Him who alone can answer for thee!

3. The arrangement of God in our distributions of time and season, as they impel us to a reckoning for the past, invite us to new purposes of future life. It is a fact, the causes of which I will not stay to investigate—nevertheless it is a fact, that when we will begin some new undertaking or better mode of living, we like to do it at the opening of some new period or term of experience: and God, to favor this disposition, provides for the recurrence of new periods. He does not measure time in straight lines of progress, but in circles. Every day is a complete circle—every year a larger complete circle. When, therefore, these circles return into themselves, then begins a new day or a new year—a day or a year unstained as yet, by any sin, and broken in upon as yet, by no false plans or schemes of life. Man rises in the morning, and it is the morning of a new day, inviting him to something new and better than before. And when the New Year comes, the very sound of the term is sanctified by associations of purity and goodness, and we may not rashly stain it with evil. If you are a Christian, now is the time to undertake better things and plan a holier life. This year may be your last—let it be your best—a fruitful year—a holy year. If you are yet without God in the world, such a time ought to have great power with you. Let the time past, spent in sin, suffice you. And now, this day, as Nature begins anew her circle of regenerated motion, do you begin, with it, a life of true wisdom. Many of you have long been promising that, by a certain time, you would begin a religious life. God brings out now before you the unpolluted year, and invites you to fulfil your intention. He declares, if you will receive it, the remission of sins that are past—cancels all the records of sin and pollution—and offers to begin with you anew. Shall encouragements so persuasively offered, be as heedlessly repelled? Must

the seasons and days of this coming year roll on through another circle of neglect and guilt—perhaps the last?

4. It is another moral benefit secured, by our distribution of seasons and years, that God thus teaches us, in the most impressive manner possible, the value of time. Had He left us to guess its progress, by some faint tokens or undistinguished incidents, we might have less opinion of its value. But now, we see, that He has made the whole material frame an organ of time. We inhabit a system of machinery, in which every wheel and motion, orbit and oscillation tells the hours. And this great engine of time is not less exact than it is magnificent. No second has ever been lost, since the day, when first the word of the Almighty set it in motion. Let them be, he said—for signs and for seasons, and for days and years—let them declare to every creature, in every world, the certain flight of time, and signify its sacred value. The gems he has buried in the sands of his rivers; on the gold He has piled His mountains of rock; the pearls he has hid in the depth of the sea; but Time, Time, is out on the front of all created magnificence. The first thing accomplished, and that by the highest works of grandeur and power, is the indication of time. And, in this, what does He say to us and to all intelligent creatures, in all worlds, but that Time is the most precious of His gifts.

Would that we were less insensible, my hearers, to this most impressive lesson of the Almighty! God is telling us everywhere, by signs of awful grandeur, that time is a precious thing, and that we cannot afford to lose a moment. From the heaven of heavens, where He holds his throne, he numbers to us the hours, and calls us to apply our hearts unto wisdom. And what do we? What have we done?—what do we design to do? Who can think that such a world as this, is made for trifling? Cease, giddy mortal! awake thou, dreamer of indolence and self-indulgence! duty calls! heaven waits! Serious and awful results are pending—the strong enginery of heaven is driving on the hours, and there is not a moment to be lost!

5. God, in the institution of the seasons, designs to impress it upon us as a truth of practical moment, that everything must be done in its time. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun. In other words, there is an exact time fixed in the purposes of God, in which everything must be done, if done at all. If the Christian is to do anything for his Master, there is a time in which it must be done, or never. If the sinner is to repent, there is a time in which he will repent; and if he passes by that certain time, his harvest is past and his summer ended.

And God has kindly ordered the world itself, so as to impress this truth upon every man that lives. If there were no successions of day and night, or of seasons; if all things had been made to stand in a given posture, no such lesson would have been impressed. We might work and trade, might plant, sow, and harvest any and all kinds of fruits, at any and all times. The sluggard would never feel behind his time, and nothing could be out of season. But instead of such an

arrangement, God has given us day and night, and a round of ever-changing seasons, and whatsoever we do needs to be done in its time. It must then be done, or never. The plants have all a time which is natural to them, and no other will answer. They grow, they blossom, they ripen, in their appointed time. The same universal clock-work, which measures our times, measures also theirs. And without observing it, we cannot even feed our bodies. If we want the light of day, we cannot have it in the night; and we go to our work, every morning, under the commandment—work while the day lasts, the night cometh when no man can work. The tradesman observes the seasons. The husbandman watches them for his life. And thus we are trained to the habitual conviction, that whatsoever we do, must be done in its time. So well is it understood, that one is deemed scarcely better than an idiot, who will undertake to do, or produce anything, after the season is past. And this impression, forced upon the outward man, is designed to serve the benefit of the spiritual; that we may never neglect our opportunities of grace and duty.

There are, alas! a great many Christians, or professed disciples who design to do much good in the world, but the time never comes for doing it. They mean, at length, to break through all their worldly snares and slay all their evil habits, but the time never comes. But if you never find the time, my brethren, for executing your good purposes, what are they worth? Need I expostulate with you concerning a folly so manifest? Were there any meaning in your good purposes, you would be ever seeking after those times and opportunities when God will assist you to do the good you intend; nor, if you sought such opportunities, could you fail to find them. But, alas! these vain resolves, these ineffectual and sluggish longings, these good purposes never fulfilled, are the most treacherous and fatal instruments of deceit you can employ. Dismiss them for ever! Do the good you meditate! Or, if you can never find the time for doing it, have the frankness to confess that your good intentions are hollow and worthless.

Let my hearers out of Christ, too, receive this lesson. There is, doubtless, a time set, in the purposes of God, when every man will turn the scale of his immortality—a time when he will come to Christ, if he comes at all. If that time is already past, no urgency of mine, or consideration of yours, will ever repair the mischief. If it is future, if the season of harvest is yet to come, how carefully does it become you to watch for it, that it may not pass unimproved. Or, it may be present. To-day may be the time. Entering here upon another religious year, the decisive hour may have here come. And which way shall the decision turn? Ask not for delay. What is to be done now, remember, must be done now, or it never will be. You cannot plant in the winter, nor gather fruit in the spring. God's times are set, and the seasons of his mercy all ordained from the beginning. There is no time of salvation but the time of God!

6. It is worthy of distinct notice, that God has so ordered our times and seasons as, at once, to keep us advised of our rapid transit, and, by

the same means also, to intimate our immortality. The times, and seasons, and days, and years flying on, with a swiftness that portends annihilation, can yet break over no boundary. Nature is ever returning into herself. She does not stand waxing old without renovation; nor does she move on a straight line of progress, passing by land-marks never again to be seen. But she comes round, in ever returning circles, to begin her course anew and renovate all her decays. All that perishes she regenerates. Every day has its resurrection in the day that comes after it. Every year returns, in a renewed circle of months and seasons. The dying flowers come to life again, blossoming out of the seeds in which they have folded their beauty, and the grave of the year, which autumn closes, the spring re-opens. And thus it is made to be the habit and familiar attitude of our minds to look for a reproduction of all that perishes—of our friends who die, of ourselves—a habit which is intellectually confirmed and sealed by revelation. Times and seasons do not kill. We see, in death, no destroyer, but the transit only of that circular motion, which we doubt not shall still roll on with a renewed and ever renewing immortality.

The twelve who have gone from us, the last year, have no more perished than the twelve signs of the zodiac; and, as these are set by the Almighty to renew their presence in the heavens, so shall they be ever renewing their inextinguishable life before the throne of God. The bands of Orion, which cannot be loosed, encompass them all. The infant child, so soon removed from life, has, so soon, renewed its being at the great fountain of immortality. The widowed mother's son still lives, though her heart breaks over his grave. The placid head of the worthy father, who prayed with us, and handed us, so often, the cup of Christ, has only ascended to a new circle of regenerated youth, and become a higher star, shedding a genial and more tranquil light. These all—all live. And so shall all of us. We cannot die. Seeing, then, before us, a being that cannot end, let every day, and night, and season, and year, that God has ordained, remind us of it, and hasten our preparation for the life that is to come. Seek ye Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night. The Lord is His name.

Another impression, closely related to the one here described, is also forced upon us, and forms a natural close to these meditations. The impression, I mean of some stable and changeless empire of being, which the established round of seasons and years, and the mechanical order of heaven, itself suggests and confirms. Were there no motion of times and seasons, nothing but a standing posture in the worlds, stability, permanency itself would be scarcely more than a pause, and we might only wait for some unknown explosion to end it. Our idea of stability is generated, by observing how change prosecutes a perpetual war, and yet cannot break the peace. The times and seasons fly, universal motion swings the orbs along, and yet the great celestial fabric, as a whole, rests in stable repose. The change, we see, reveals a stability which change cannot shake. Time is measured out, as it were,

by eternity; and the clock of the seasons and years is the heaven of heavens, where God Himself rests the basis of his throne. We do our day's works, by the measurement Heaven gives us, and are thus, in every transitory moment, kept in sight of our home. Nor is this a labored and difficult thought, which has no practical verity. The impression of which I speak, is one that we all *feel*, however we may reason or neglect to reason concerning it. And, therefore, *heaven* is the word that signifies the eternity of the righteous. This eternal home and stable rest is the goal of our being. Here below all is fugitive; and God, in the flight of times and seasons, is but chasing us home to the rest for which we sigh. There is such a rest, He declares, by the very signs that measure out our fugitive moments—a rest of changeless good, as firm as the everduring order of heaven—an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. Nor could He ever show you the meaning of time, till He had shown you also this, which is the errand of time and the term of its flight.

And now, my hearers, let there be an end to all your complaints and sentimental repinings over the swiftness of time and the fugitive nature of earthly good. Should it not be so? An end, also, to all your vain endeavors to settle a condition of permanence here. The great original decree of times and seasons, and days and years, is against you. God makes all fugitive round you, that He may hasten you onward to that world which is to be your proper home and mansion. With a ready mind consent to His decree. Let go any hope that fastens on this fugitive world. Let it pass, as rapidly as it may. And now, as this new year opens, take the lesson God gives you. Be content, as a mortal, to suffer your mortality. Consecrate the flying moments of your life wholly to God, and seize, with a determined faith, on that enduring substance which is set before you.

SERMON CCCLXV.

BY THE REV. ALBERT BARNES.

OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

ON DANCING.

"But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."—1 Cor. viii. 12, 13.

This was the resolution of a great and generous mind. It was such a determination as only noble minds and hearts can make. It evinces a superiority to self-indulgence, a disposition to consult the feelings and views of others, a readiness to sacrifice that which might conduce to one's own comfort, in order to save others from falling into sin, such as only large-hearted and liberal souls possess. The case was this. It was a question among the early converts to Christianity whether it was lawful to eat the meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Many held that as idolatry was unlawful, to buy and participate of the meat which had been so offered, and which was exposed for sale in the market, would be in fact lending countenance to idolatry, and would be unlawful. On this subject the mind of Paul was made up. He had no doubt that it was in itself lawful. But if his indulgence in a thing of the lawfulness of which he had no doubt, should offend another member of the Church, or lead him into sin, he would wholly abstain ever afterward. The purity, peace and welfare of the Church; the preservation of a good conscience in all its members, was of more importance than it was for him to gratify his appetite even in a matter that seemed to him to be entirely lawful, and he was willing to abstain for ever. I doubt whether such a determination was ever formed except under the influence of true religion; I am certain it never was but by a large-hearted and liberal man.

It is worthy of remark, also, that the persons whose consciences were to be consulted in this matter, were confessedly among the "weaker" of the brethren. "And through thy knowledge shall thy *weak* brother perish." "Ye sin against the brethren and wound their *weak* conscience." It was not the rich, the learned, the great, or the gay who were concerned, and whose delicate and refined feelings it might be naturally supposed any one would be likely to consult. It was confessedly the less learned, the less stable, the less influential—

the class of persons who would be usually thought to be "not worth minding." 'Of what consequence,' some might have asked, 'is *their* opinion in the case? Their apprehensions are the effect of mere ignorance and prejudice—resulting from their obscure training, and want of refined education—and whether they approve or disapprove of our conduct, whether they are edified or not, can make little difference. If we follow our own views, and if we secure the good opinion of those more elevated in life, we need not be concerned about their pleasure or displeasure.' Not thus reasoned Paul. It *was* of importance what they thought, and how they felt;—and the bearing of a certain course of conduct, even if it was lawful, on the weakest member of the Church, *was to be* regarded. It was of so much consequence in his view, that he was prepared to sacrifice his own comfort and convenience during all his life, rather than be the occasion of offence to the weakest member of the flock. Again I say, that it is doubtful whether such a principle was ever acted on except under the influence of religion; it is certain that it never was but by a large-hearted and liberal man. The bearing of this principle on the subject which I propose to discuss at this time you will see presently.

I propose to apply this principle to the subject of dancing, and particularly to the question whether it is consistent and proper for professing Christians to engage in the dance, and to train up their children for it. It is often said of a certain class of Christians and Christian ministers, that they are bigoted, narrow-minded, and Puritanical in this matter; that there is a remarkable ignorance of the world and of what is necessary to enjoyment in refined life in such views as I shall now submit to you; and that we make war on innocent amusements, and are disposed rudely "to trample down the flowers that grow by the way-side, and to strew the eternal path with brimstone." Whether it has been the general character of my preaching to make war on that which goes to promote our real happiness here and hereafter, those who are accustomed to hear me are well able to judge. I may remark, also, that I am much less concerned with the observation that these views are narrow-minded and Puritanical, than I am with the inquiry whether the practice under consideration is consistent with the Christian profession, and in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament. My impression may differ from that of some of you, but it has not seemed to me that the charge of greatest force which can be brought against Christians of the present time is, that they are in danger of not being sufficiently liberal and accommodating in worldly matters; that they are likely to draw the reins too close about worldly indulgences and amusements; or that they are likely to debar themselves and their children too much from whatever pleasures the world may have to confer.

I propose to arrange my observations under two general heads.

I. I shall make some preliminary and explanatory remarks, that we may have the question fairly before us; and

II. I shall consider the question whether it is expedient and proper for Christians to unite with others in the dance, and to train their children for it.

I. Under the first general head, I would observe,

(1.) The question before us is not whether it is proper to train up a family to appear well in life; to be characterized by urbanity, courtesy, and true refinement of heart and manners. It is not whether it is desirable that children should be so reared as to demean themselves well in any situation where they may be placed; so as to avoid painful awkwardness and embarrassment, and so as to appear with ease and propriety in any social circle. No question will be raised on that point, in this house; and as to the importance of the thing itself, there will be no difference of opinion. We have not so read the Bible, or studied the nature of Christianity, as to suppose that it has *any* precepts that countenance roughness and boorishness of manners; that it is the patron of bluntness, incivility, or sourness of temper; or that there is any holiness in disregarding the courtesies of life, or in awkwardness of mien or gesture. We do not believe that roughness of exterior can be made to demonstrate that the heart is peculiarly intent on spiritual things, or that neglect of the ordinary usages of refined society can be regarded as among the means of grace, or a passport to the Divine favor. The precept "be courteous," cannot be forgotten. The example of Paul may be referred to as of one of singular urbanity of manners; and the whole life and the precepts of the Lord Jesus may be mentioned also, as illustrating the importance of true courtesy and refinement. We might also observe, that it is by the precepts and influence of Christianity, far more than by the rules of men like Chesterfield, that true refinement will be, and is kept up in the world. A man under the full influence of the Gospel from his early years, will be a truly refined and courteous man. If there are exceptions to the laws of true courtesy among Christians, they occur in cases where conversion takes place at a period of life too far advanced to have the manners moulded by the new system, or where by perverted vision, some special merit seems to be attached to coarseness of manners, as if this were a means of grace. But of the importance of all that is meant by true courtesy, ease, refinement of mind and manners, no question will be raised here. The only question is, whether that is to be gained *only* in the dancing school; or whether it may not be obtained elsewhere, without the dangers incident to an attempt to seek it there.

(2.) The question is not whether "balls" are or are not as proper as large and expensive fashionable parties; whether it may not be as consistent for a professing Christian to join in the dance, as to give such a party, or to mingle in such scenes of frivolity. On that question, which is often raised, it is not necessary to go into a discussion, or even to express an opinion in order to elucidate the subject before us. As "two wrongs do not make a right," so it does not prove that one thing is right to show that it is no worse than another, or prove

that one custom is consistent or proper for a professing Christian because another is freely indulged in of a similar character. For myself, I freely confess I see no great difference; and as a Christian man, I would as soon accept of an invitation to the one as to the other. Entertaining the opinion myself, that large and fashionable parties, involving much expense, and having the predominating influence there worldly, and being such in conversation and manner of amusement as the world approves, are wholly inconsistent with the Christian profession, I might be prepared to concede all that is implied in the remark, that dancing is no worse than such parties. The question still would be, however, whether either was consistent and proper for a professor of the religion of Christ.

(3.) Nor is the question whether the practice of dancing is consistent for the votaries of the world. I admit that it is *entirely consistent* for them; whether it is *right* or *wise*, is quite another question. It is entirely consistent for them, however, because they profess to be governed by no principles which would come in conflict with it, or which are in any way violated by it. The practice is not in violation of any sentiments which they profess to entertain; of any views or obligations which they have taken upon themselves; of any of the objects of life at which they aim; of any opinions which they profess to cherish of the real value of things; of any anticipation which they have of a future state of being; and in general is not inconsistent with any lessons in which they have been educated. The aim of the people of the world is *to make the most of the present life*, and chiefly in the way of enjoyment or pleasure. This object is prominent in youth, and lives on often when we should suppose that years would give more sedateness, and graver views of the purposes of living. But with this purpose in view, it is just a question with them how they can make the most of this world—of the seasons, months, and years, as they flee away. Whether that which they seek can be best found in the ball-room, the splendid party, the theatre, or even in the low haunt of dissipation and revelry, is just a matter of calculation and probabilities, but does not infringe on any principles which they hold, or any views which they profess to entertain of the objects of living. When, therefore, in imagination, I look in upon a ball-room, and see a large and brilliant assembly with all that can fascinate in lights, and dresses, and music, and graceful movements, sad as the spectacle is, according to the views which I entertain of the object of living, still I see nothing *inconsistent* with any views which they entertain. They profess to act with no reference to the grave, or to the judgment-bar, or to eternity. They do not profess to have any reference to the glory of God, or the love of Christ, or the worth of the soul, or the obligations of prayer. They do not profess to place their happiness in God and in the hope of heaven. When looking on such a scene, though I may weep over what seems to me obvious folly, yet I see no professed principle violated; no disregarded vows; no violated pledges; and I can have a *sort of* respect for them—as I always must have for consistency with

avowed principles—though I may mourn that they have no better. I will weep that they have no better views of life, of the dignity and worth of the soul, of what they might enjoy, of that eternal crown which they might obtain; but with the views which they cherish, I do not know why we should not say to them, 'Thoughtless triflers! dance on. Make the most of life. It will soon be ended; and as the insect tribes that flutter in the beams of the evening sun will soon reach the close of their ephemeral being, and terminate their life and their dances together, so it will be with you. If most enjoyment can be crowded into a ball-room, why seek it there, and let the experiment be fairly made: and since you have no higher aims of living, and no higher view of the dignity of your nature; since you have no aspirations for heaven, and since you *will* go down to hell, why you may as well go through a ball-room as in a path less strewed with flowers—victims not inappropriately decked with garlands as a sacrifice to the god of this world.' So Solomon addressed the youth of his time. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the light of thine eyes;—but know thou that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment." Eccl. xi. 9. Such a course is *consistent* for the people of the world; whether it is for the professor of the religion of Jesus, is quite a different inquiry.

We are now prepared to state the question before us in few words. It is, whether it is consistent and proper for professing Christians to engage in amusements like these; and whether it is consistent and proper for Christian parents to train up their children for them. To consider this question was my

II. Second object. In doing this, I shall submit a few considerations, in the briefest manner possible.

(1.) The practice in question is an offence and source of pain to a large portion of the Church. In illustrating this, I recall to your recollection the magnanimous determination of the Apostle Paul in my text. The thing referred to in his case, was in itself perfectly allowable according to his own views; a thing about whose propriety and even necessity for his comfort, much might be said; a thing in which he could have been in little danger of losing his spirituality, or his love of prayer, or of disregarding any of the claims of religion on his *time* if he had indulged in it, and yet there was a portion of the Church that would be liable to be led into sin if he gave indulgence to what he felt assured was in itself perfectly proper, and he therefore resolved that if *that* was to be the result, he would eat no meat while the world stood. Now, in reference to the specific matter under consideration, there is always a portion of a Church, and usually a very large portion, who have decided convictions of its impropriety. They regard it as inconsistent with the Gospel, with the sacred nature of Christian vows, and with the proper spirit of Christianity. They are seeking to convince their children of the same thing, and to show them that there are graces desirable for youth, which cannot be obtained in a dancing-

school; that there is an ornament of the soul which will not be imparted in the ball-room. They are pained by the conduct of their brethren who indulge in such amusements, and who train their children for them. They have sorrow of heart when they know that they who profess the same religion, and sit down at the same communion table, open their parlors for the dance, but come not themselves to the prayer-meeting; that they are known in circles where the worldly find their consistent and appropriate amusements, but have no communion of heart with their Christian brethren. They regret, too, the influence which it may have on their own children. A ball given by a professing Christian, or the fact that a professing Christian trains his children in a dancing-school, is a "thing not done in a corner." If anything is likely to be *known* in a community, and especially among the youth of a congregation, it is such a fact; and being known, it is very likely to counteract the efforts of others, and especially of a pastor, to impress the young with the importance of other things than trifles.

Now, in such a matter, it is not difficult to understand how Paul would have acted. Even with your own views—if we may be allowed for the sake of the argument to suppose that Paul could have ever had your views on this subject—his conduct would have been prompt and decisive. That noble-minded man would have said, 'This consideration determines the matter. Whatever may be *my* private views about the lawfulness of this thing in the abstract, yet the fact that large numbers of those for whom Christ died are grieved at heart; that they may be in danger of being drawn astray by my example; and especially that they may have more difficulty in training up their children for heaven, will settle my conduct while the world stands—if I should live so long.' Would not such a resolution have been *consistent*, at least, for Paul? Would it not be right now?

You may say, perhaps, that they from whom you differ are wrong in their views, and perchance narrow-minded and unenlightened. I beg you to consider whether Paul might not have said the same thing of those who differed from *him*. Paul *knew* that they were in error. He had no doubt of it. He reasoned the case with them—showed them that they were wrong—and with ten thousand times as much truth and force of argument as you can use in defending your position—and still that great man said, 'If this thing makes my brother to offend, I have no more to do with it. That settles the matter to my mind; that determines my conduct for ever.'

You may say, perhaps, that those who doubt the propriety of training up children for dancing, are among the poorer and less informed members of the church; that they are of somewhat more humble rank than yourselves, and would have scarcely the means, in most instances, of indulging in this amusement, and of educating their children in this manner; and perhaps should an intimation of their views reach your ear, you might find the thought making its way across your mind, that "they and their opinions are not worth regarding." You will not have

forgotten, however, that this was just the case in the instance referred to in the text. It was the "*weak* conscience" that Paul regarded; it was the "*weak* brother" "for whom Christ died," who was in danger of perishing by the conduct of others. But not to insist on this, there are two thoughts which I will submit in this connection. The *first* is, that the views entertained of the impropriety of the practice which I am considering, are *not* the views of the weaker members of the Church only. They are the views of the body of the Christian Church; why should I be restrained from saying, what I believe is true, of all who contribute anything to its real spiritual strength and efficiency? They are the views of the most serious, consistent, devout and intelligent Christians—and no one dare deny this. The *second* thing which I would observe is, that, on the supposition that they are the views of the more obscure and humble of the members of the Church, it is not safe for a professing Christian, or any other man to disregard or despise them. I will refer you here to two or three declarations of the Saviour which seem to have been uttered for just such an occasion as this. "Wo unto the world because of offences." Matt. xviii. 7. "It is impossible but that offences will come! but wo unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend *one of these little ones.*" Luke xvii. 1, 2. "Take heed that ye offend not *one of these little ones;* for I say unto you that in Heaven the angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." Matt. xviii. 10.

(2.) A second consideration which I suggest is, that the practice in question is a worldly affair altogether—part and parcel of a system having reference only to this life, and confessedly affording no facilities for securing the blessings of the life to come. As this point would be conceded by every one, the time will not be consumed in a useless argument on it. No one ever has maintained, or can maintain, that it is or can be a means of grace; that it tends to prepare the mind for prayer, for a more thoughtful searching of the Bible, for a closer attention to the preaching of the Gospel, or for a serious contemplation of death and the judgment. It secures none of the influences which promote the salvation of the soul; which promote tenderness of conscience, true repentance, or faith in the Lord Jesus. A ball-room is not a place where revivals of religion commence, and *when* a revival of pure religion exists among a people, the ball-room is of course abandoned. I know it may be said that in a few instances individuals have been awakened and led to see the folly and sin of such a course by reflections occurring there, and I do not deny that such a thing is *possible.* But the same thing has also occurred in a theatre, and in a low haunt of dissipation, and even in celebrating in mockery and profaneness, the Lord's Supper; but a Christian parent would scarcely select such places as having a tendency to bring his son or daughter to Christ. I know that it is said, also, that there is sometimes religious enjoyment in such a place, and professing Christians speak of

having interesting serious reflections there, and even communion with God. There may *possibly* be disgust at such scenes; there may be a sad and sickening recollection of the folly of all this; there may be pensiveness and melancholy—feelings often mistaken for religion; but it is strange that a professing Christian should speak of resorting to a ball-room as a place where to cultivate the graces of deadness to the world, and the meek and humble spirit of the Redeemer. By the great body certainly of professing Christians, it will not be denied that the whole arrangement is worldly. It is for grace of manner; for ease of movement; for a qualification to be introduced into the world, not into the Church; for a preparation to appear well in the social circle; as an accomplishment that is to fit for this world, not for Heaven. No one dreams that an accomplishment of this kind can recommend the soul to God, or prepare a child for entering into his kingdom. Can it be supposed that grace of manners sought under the hand of the dancing-master, is to be a substitute for faith in Christ Jesus and repentance towards God, when we and our children are brought to his bar?

Now I anticipate that this consideration will be felt only by Christians. It has no weight with the people of the world. It may be with them a subject of sneers and of derision. But admitting that the arrangement is a part of a great system of worldliness, the question is, whether it is consistent and proper for professing Christians to patronize and encourage it? With the people of the world, I admit, as I have done already, it *is* consistent. They violate no principle by it on which they profess to act. They disregard no solemn vows. They have never taken any pledge, or made any promise which implies the contrary. But you have. You profess to have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. You have given yourselves to God. You have pledged yourselves to come out from the world. You profess to be animated by the Spirit of Christ; to seek the glory of God; to live for Heaven; to see and feel that this world is a vain show, and that its fashions soon vanish away. Christ shed his blood for no such purpose as that you should become eminent in this species of amusement, nor did he once specify such eminence or *such* a grace as any evidence of being under the influence of his religion. When you professed his religion, and sat down to commemorate his death, it was for no such purpose as that you should shine henceforward in the gay world. You brought yourself voluntarily under the most sacred and solemn of all conceivable obligations to lead a life like that of Christ—to be dead to the world; to be serious, sober, prayerful, and to live for Heaven. The vow was voluntary. No one compelled you to take it. It was your own purpose. Its nature was well understood. It was supposed by you and others to imply a separation from the world. How can you then disregard that solemn covenant made at the altar of your God, and again mingle with the world in all that constitutes the peculiarity of their amusements? You sit down at the communion table, and your hands handle the bread of life—and then you go and

join in the dance, and teach your children, not to come to the communion table and to be prepared for Heaven, but to be prepared to shine in the gay and thoughtless world. You lead them away from the influences of religion, and into scenes where, if they are ever converted, it will be by the grace of God counteracting the whole tendency of their training. Now the world will see, and say, whether this is, or is not *consistent* for a Christian—and there is no difficulty in determining the question. They feel and know that the object at which a Christian should aim should be to seek first the kingdom of God, and to train up his children for Heaven. The whole process connected with dancing is inconsistent with the aim of life which the Christian professes to seek. He professedly lives for Heaven. The soul, according to his professed views, is of a value which no words can estimate, and for which no amount of gold or diamonds would be an equal exchange. Meanwhile that child which may be cut down in a moment, and fade like the flower, is trained under influences adverse to the salvation of the soul, and is conducted by that parent to scenes which tend to drive all consideration of its worth from his mind. You may tell me that this is the case with a thousand other things, and that this is no more inconsistent than they are. That may be. We will not regard that now. Our specific business now is with *this* species of amusement, and the remark that other things are as bad in their influence as this, or are even worse, does not make *this* consistent and right.

(3.) The third consideration which I submit, kindred to the one just suggested, is that this is *a training* FOR *the world.* It is not only worldly in its influence now, and not only tends to exclude religion from the mind at present, but it is *prospectively* worldly, and is adapted to bear in that manner on the future life. My remark here, also, is addressed to Christians, and I anticipate that others will regard what I say here as of little force, and very likely as the ebullition of a narrow mind. But the question is, whether it is *consistent* and *proper* for Christians to train up their children in a course that contemplates an introduction into the gay world, rather than into the kingdom of God; which is a preparation for a life of gaiety, rather than for a life of humble, prayerful piety; and which is an arrangement adapted to the scenes of fashion, rather than for an introduction into the kingdom of Heaven.

Of the *fact* on which I base my remarks under this head, I presume there will be no doubt. The training in the dancing-school, so far as it has any bearing at all, is a training to appear well, or to shine in the gay world. It is not a part of the training for the communion-table, or for the office of Sabbath school teacher, or of a Tract distributor, or of a missionary to the heathen, or to impart Christian consolation to the afflicted, or to qualify to enter into Heaven. Not one of these things enters into the arrangement; not one of them is sought. In fact, the connection between this species of training, and a somewhat formal introduction into the gay world, technically known as

"going into society," is about as close as the four years' study in the university is with graduating at commencement, and often the introduction into the world in the one form is made a matter of quite as much magnitude as the other. The system of training here referred to, is that which is preparatory to an introduction into a world of peculiar organization, and an organization diametrically opposed to the kingdom of Christ. For it is a world where immortal beings live for dances and revelry; where art is exhausted; where night becomes more brilliant than day; where music lavishes its powers to give pleasure to the ear and joy to the heart. In such a world we look in vain for prayer; for the serious reading of the Bible; for an humble and penitent sitting at the feet of the Redeemer. It is a world of splendor without enjoyment; of professions without sincerity; of flattery without soul; of smiles where the heart is full of envy and chagrin; where the cup of pleasure has dregs of wormwood, and where momentary bliss is succeeded by long nights of painful reminiscences and by despair. In that world there is "restless pride without gratification; ostentation without motive or reward; ceremony without comfort; laughter without joy; smiles which conceal real rancor, and praise alloyed with envy, and dying away in the whispers of calumny." There "every step appears light and airy as the radiant footsteps of the morning; every form and feature appears luminous with contentment and hope;" but every heart is yet to be sad; every conscience is to utter the language of rebuke; and the recollection of all this folly is yet to bathe the cheek in tears, or sink the soul in despair—and shall Christian parents train up their children for such a world? No child dances into Heaven, but many a one dances into hell; and if they ever reach Heaven, the gay and light trippings of the dance will be exchanged for a walk sedate and grave like that of the Redeemer.

Perhaps you will tell me that there were dances in olden times—that Miriam and David danced. So they did, as an act of solemn religious worship. Our customs differ from theirs; but if your dances are of that kind, we will argue the question on that ground, and consider the question whether that is the best mode of worship under the Christian dispensation. Perhaps you will tell me that the Saviour, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, mentioned dancing in the father's house as an expression of joy, without disapprobation. So he did; and he also mentioned the conduct of the prodigal son himself without expressing disapprobation, and in another parable he spoke of the unjust judge, and in another commended the unjust steward, without a distinct expression of his opinion. Did he, therefore, approve of these things? Is it a proper principle of interpretation that everything that the Saviour *mentions* in a parable is therefore right? Were the "thieves" who are mentioned in the parable of the good Samaritan to be regarded as *right* in plundering him and leaving him half dead? Is it not known that there is many a circumstance thrown into a parable for the sake of *keeping* or verisimilitude, without implying any opinion about its being right or wrong? Perhaps it will be remarked that Solomon

said, "there is a time to dance." Eccl. iii. 4. So he did; and so he also remarked that there was "a time to hate," and "a time to make war," and "a time to kill." Time was found, *in fact*, to do all these things when he lived; and, I regret to add, that it is as true now as it was then, that time is found to do them still. Whether they are *right* now, or were then, is quite another question. There are thousands of things *done in fact* in the world about whose propriety there may be reasonable ground of debate.

(4.) I submit one other consideration only. It is the estimate which is formed of this conduct by the people of the world themselves. A minister of the Gospel "*must* have a good report of them which are without;" and I take it, it is equally important that Christians who are not ministers should have a similar reputation. They are lights in the world; representatives of religion; epistles of Christ; cities set on a hill. Now it is in vain to attempt to conceal from ourselves the estimate which the world forms of us and of our walk and deportment. The people of the world—the gay, the fashionable, the proud, the vain, the sober and sedate—*will* form their opinions of professing Christians; and will, as they have a right to, express freely their sentiments. I blame them not for this. I commend them for it, and consider the fact that they *will* do it as one of the best safeguards of the purity of the Church. I would, therefore, that every professing Christian, indulging in the practice on which I am commenting, could hear the remarks made by the very community of worldliness which he seeks to please, and know the real estimate in which they hold him. It may be well to specify in a word or two the opinions which they form of such a professing Christian. They are such as these:

1. They do not regard you as a *serious* Christian—as one imbued with the importance of eternal realities, and anxious mainly that you and your family should be prepared for Heaven.

2. They do not regard you as a *consistent* Christian. They profess to know what Christianity requires, and they do not often judge much amiss. They see a marked inconsistency between the vows which you took when you became a member of the Church and your present conduct; they cannot reconcile it with their views of consistency to sit down and partake of the body and blood of Christ, and then to go and join in the dance with the thoughtless and the gay. They know that religion demands a different thing; and though they profess to have no love for religion themselves, they have an eye keen to mark the inconsistencies of a professedly Christian life.

3. They never *speak* of you with respect for doing it. They speak of you as disregarding the solemn vows which you have made; as not understanding the nature of religion; as dishonoring the Christian profession; and as having no claim to respect as a professor of Christianity. You never heard a man of the world speaking respectfully of a Christian in a theatre, in a ball-room, or in a gay and splendid party. They have no love for religion, but they know what *consistency* is; and much as they hate religion, they will always speak

more contemptuously of the inconsistencies of its professors than they will of religion itself. There *is* a way of commanding the respect of even a vain, giddy, frivolous, proud and wicked world. It is by a consistent life; by a serious, meek deportment; by integrity of purpose; by deadness to the world; and by the seriousness, gentleness, tenderness, affection and love to which religion prompts.

4. They do not regard you as a Christian *at all.* On this point I may venture to appeal to the world. There would be no hesitation in expressing their views, and no ambiguity where those views are expressed. They may esteem you and love you on many accounts, but it is not because they regard you as Christians. They may admire you for your wit, or your accomplishments; for the elegance of your dress, or your manners; for your intelligence, or your beauty; but they never so far forget themselves as to regard you as a Christian. They may value your society because it augments their happiness, or because you seem to keep them in countenance in their frivolity, but they never think of you as having any true love for the cross of Christ, or any just views of the nature of religion. Too well they understand the nature of religion to suppose that it will lead its votaries to such scenes of vanity and frivolity: and when they wish to refer to those who are true ornaments of the Christian profession, and who resemble their Saviour, they never think of referring to you; it is to another and a far different class—the meek, the gentle, the spiritually-minded—to those who are at home by the bed-side of the suffering, not to those who mingle in the mazy dance; to those who love the place of prayer, not to those who aim to shine in the brilliant halls of fashion. And if, perchance, these same votaries of the gay world have occasion—as they often do—to refer to those in the Christian ranks who are a scandal and an offence to the Christian name—having the form of godliness but denying its power—it is to those who are willing to forget the solemnity of their own Christian vows and to mingle with those who profess no better things in the scenes of vanity and folly. Make the honest inquiry the world over, and there would be but one opinion on this subject. They never regard you as Christians. They never think of you as such. They never refer to you as such. They may regard you as amiable, accomplished, fascinating, intelligent—but they have but one opinion on the question whether you are Christians; and among all the votaries of vanity the world over, it is to be presumed that not one can be found who will speak of you as having any religion. Living, they regard you as a dishonor to the Christian name, and they will have no other feeling in respect to you when you die. For themselves, they expect if they ever become Christians, for ever to abandon such scenes of vanity; nor does it ever occur to them that true religion and the scenes of the ball-room are compatible with each other.

5. Your example is just what the people of the world refer to as an excuse when we urge them to become Christians. There is a professing Christian, say they, to-day all seriousness, sedateness, demureness,

and sanctimoniousness at the communion table. To-morrow he joins in the dance with as much joyousness as if he had never heard of Gethsemane, of Calvary, or of Heaven. He is a saint at the altar, aud a patron of the world when away; a devout worshipper on the Sabbath, and a leader of vanity through the week. To-day, in the Sanctuary, he joins in fervent prayer for the salvation of his children, and marvels that they are not converted. To-morrow, he puts them under the instruction of worldliness and vanity; throws them into influences as far from the cross as the earth is from heaven, and trains them for a world as frivolous as though there were no such thing as a grave, or a judgment seat. *We* may marvel that his children are not converted; angelic beings see in it no cause of wonder.

It may seem strange that I have felt it my duty to occupy a whole discourse with the consideration of a topic of this kind. If such wonder should be felt, I have two things to say in reply.

One is, that I regard it as sufficiently important to settle, if it can be done, just views of what is right on a subject on which, in practice at least, the professedly Christian world is so much divided. The other is, that it is of infinite moment to impress just views on a subject of this nature on those who are just entering on life—on the minds of youth. Many of the youth whom I address have been solemnly dedicated to God in Christian baptism. Many have been trained in the bosom of pious families, and in Sabbath schools. Some are professors of religion, having, like Mary, chosen that "good part which shall not be taken from them." All have been the subject of many prayers that they may be saved. All are forming their characters for this life and for that which is to come. For all the Son of God poured out his precious blood that they might be redeemed. With all the Holy Spirit strives, that they may become serious and sober Christians. To all the offers of salvation are made in the Gospel. All will soon stand at the judgment-bar, and all, if life is trifled away, will soon be beyond the reach of hope and mercy. All are now in a world of probation, and all are soon to leave it to re-visit it no more.

Dear Youth! Candidate for heaven! The ball-room is not far from the grave; and from the scenes of hilarity in the one you will soon go to the gloom of the other. The ball-room is not far from the eternal world—but Oh, how unlike are the scenes in the one to those of the other! The one is *not* a place of preparation for the other. It is not the place which God has appointed as that for which youth should prepare for the world of glory. No one by the amusements of a ball-room has been made fit for heaven, nor do any of its pleasures form the mind to enjoy God. Why, then, should the precious season of probation be wasted in such scenes? Why, amidst its amusements, should the hope of everlasting life be endangered? Remember that you dance over the grave; remember that the moments wasted thus will be reviewed when you stand at the bar of God, and far on in that eternal world to which you go. Then, no wasted season can

be recalled, and if the soul is lost you can never, never recover the opportunity of salvation which you once enjoyed.

You may say—I am persuaded that you will say—that all this is proper for me to preach; that I have advanced no sentiments, which, as a Christian minister, I ought not to do; that I am bound to endeavor to promote serious religion, and to introduce the pure principles of the Gospel into all the families committed to my pastoral charge. This you will admit is right for me; but whether you shall comply with my appeals, you may regard as a very different matter. Let us put down the foot here. We have then one point settled. It is, that *I* am but doing my duty in advocating such views. It becomes then a question of grave bearing, whether it can be *right* for you to disregard them? Professor of religion, Christian parent, hear me. There is nothing right for *you* which is not for *me;* nothing right in *your* family which is not in *mine;* nothing which you may allow which I might not also. If you may have wine, and splendid parties, and balls in your family, I ask you to point me to the place in the New Testament which will show that I may not also. And further. There is nothing which it is right for me to *preach*, which it will be right for you to *disregard.* Let us be consistent; say at once that what I advance is wrong, or else yield to it, and act in accordance with what you admit to be true.

Let me speak one word in conclusion to those who have been yielding to the practice which I have been considering—or to similar practices of worldliness—whether members of the Church or not. We have just passed through another year, and from this point we may look back, and see how it has been spent. You have been in the ball-room, and sought pleasure there, but have you been into your closet to seek the favor of God? You have been put under the training of the dancing school, but have you been seated, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus? You have been at the gay party, and sought to be admired, but have you had any solicitude to be approved of your final Judge, and to be prepared to dwell with Him? The year is gone. It left you nearer the grave, but not nearer heaven; nearer the judgment bar, but not more prepared to appear there. You have lived among the dying and the dead, and are yet unprepared to die. You began the year an unconverted sinner, and you ended it the same. You have lived through another precious period of probation, and have come to its close, as you began it, without repentance, without faith, without love to God, without evidence of pardoned sin, with no shadow of proof that you are prepared for eternity, with no reminiscence but that it has been a year of vanity and gaiety—now departed for ever.

Thoughtless trifler! For what do you live? Is this the way to pass through the only world of probation? This the way to live in that world where the Son of God died for your souls? Shall mortals thus dance gaily on the verge of the grave, and sport in a world full of tombs? Not long will you thus live. There is a limit to all these things—a time when laughter is changed to sadness, and the gay trifler is laid on a bed to rise not again. On the first Sabbath of the

new year, I admonish you to look over the past—to ask yourself how and why you have lived—and how long you can reasonably suppose that God will spare you to abuse his mercies, and to trifle with the concerns of the soul!

You enter now on a new year. What are your plans and purposes as you begin this new period of your existence? Do you purpose to begin, to continue, and to end it amidst songs and dances? Will you still rejoice at the sound of the lute, and regard life as designed only for gaiety and vanity? As you enter on this new season of probation, will you deliberately form the purpose to repeat your former scenes of amusement, and still to live in the neglect of the soul? One year may make sad changes in the prospects of many a youth who now hears me, and these cheerful anticipated songs may be changed to sadder notes. There is One on the way to meet us—somewhere now in the path which *we* are treading—at whose coming the strains of cheerful music die away, and at whose silent touch a strange numbness and chilliness seize on the limbs so full of elasticity and life. Some of you he may—he probably will meet during this year. You will turn pale, will tremble, will be horror-stricken, and will lie down and die. From anticipated gaiety and vanity, you will go to the cold grave. Instead of the joyous scenes of the dance, you will be personally interested in the solemn transactions of the judgment. The last season allotted to you for your probation will be a little portion of this year, and I solemnly entreat you as you enter on it, *not* to suffer that which is to close your probation for ever, to be spent in scenes that never fit for Heaven; in amusements, the remembrance of which will only add ten-fold horror to the world of despair!

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SERMON CCCLXVI.

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THE WORLD SUBDUED BY FAITH.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—1. John, v. 4.

To a mind unaccustomed to reflect upon the vast, and almost creative energies of its own powers, a simple statement of what a man, under the government of a strong ruling passion, may effect, is incredible. And when we narrate to such a mind what men so governed have done, if it regards us not as dealing in the fictitious and marvellous, it is yet impressed with the idea, that the individuals we instance were possessed of superhuman powers and endowments, which render them unfit examples for the imitation of the race. And yet a ruling passion only combines and concentrates upon one object, the powers of the mind, which, without such an object, are neither excited nor concentrated. And whilst we no more believe that God makes men mentally, than he does physically, alike, we yet do believe that very much of the excess of difference observable in the past and present generations of men, is owing mainly to the exciting and combining influence of a ruling passion, which, bringing all the powers of the mind to bear on one object, and keeping them there, enabled its possessors to inscribe their names in letters of light, and as enduring as the sun, upon the rock for ever. The rays of light as they fall naturally from the sun, excite no peculiar attention; but when collected by a burning glass to a focal point, they will melt the hardest substance. The notes which compose the thunder will, singly, not disturb the slumbers of an infant, but when concentrated, they burst upon the world in one peal, they cause the earth to tremble. And so the different powers of the mind may expend their strength, each on their object, without exciting any attention whatever; but when aroused and centered on one object, they excite the admiration of the world by their wonderful achievements. And this is equally true, whether the objects selected be bad or good.

In illustration of all this, may we not ask, what feats has not avarice accomplished when it subdued to its own base purposes the dif-

ferent powers of the mind? It has submitted to all manner of self-denial—and has suffered all manner of evil for the simple and silly purpose of *possessing* money. To gain its object, it caused its possessor, "first to starve in this world, and then to submit to be damned in that to come." And what has not ambition accomplished? Let the life and history of Alexander and Buonaparte answer. When the wearing of the tiara was the highest earthly distinction, there was a certain man who resolved at all hazards to be pope. This was his ambition. He became a priest, a friar. He submitted to the most awful mortifications, and for years successively. His fame spread far and wide. He was raised to the office of cardinal, but his penances were not a whit abated. A vacancy occurring in the chair of St. Peter, he was elected pope. And from that hour until the day of his death, he was as open and as gross a profligate as the world ever saw. His ruling passion, in order to obtain its object, restrained and confined to his own bosom his fiery and corrupt propensities; but when obtained, and the restraining motive was withdrawn, they burst forth like a volcano. It was their love for science and learning and discovery, that enabled a Boyle to grasp the impassive air, and a Newton to tell the strength of the unseen chains that link the planets in their orbs; and a Greenfield, without teachers, and almost without time, at the age of twenty-seven years, to master upwards of twenty languages; and a Columbus, amid difficulties almost appalling, to prosecute to completion the discovery of this Western Continent.

But great as have been and now are the achievements of these ruling passions, and others that might be named, the strongest principle known to the human heart is *faith in God.* This is the grand triumphant principle, which, in the language of our text, "overcometh the world." Military heroes have won for themselves unfading laurels in conquering kingdoms, in building up for themselves thrones and empires. But the conquests even of the greatest of them were but partial, and confined to a small portion of the earth. But the conquests of faith are universal. The conquerors whose name and fame the historic muse has recorded and sung, whilst conquerors abroad, were slaves at home; and whilst lording it over the nations were slaves to their own lusts; but faith commences its conquests at home, and follows them up and follows them out until it has overcome the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." So that of all the ruling passions or principles that occupy the human bosom, that collect up the affections, and passions, and powers of the mind, and turn their concentrated force to the obtaining of one object, faith in God is the strongest. This is plainly the sentiment of our text. And our object in the present discourse is,

I. To explain to you what Faith Is. And

II. To show you how it overcomes the World.

First. We are to explain to you what Faith is.

This we will do as briefly as possible, as the *overcoming power* of

faith is the emphatic idea of our text, and as our object is to make it the same in this discourse.

As you may all know, the Scriptures speak of various kinds of faith. There is a historical faith, which is simply a conviction that the Bible is true,—there is a temporary faith, which, like Jonah's gourd, appears for a little time and then vanishes away;—there was a miraculous faith granted to the Apostles to work miracles for the confirmation of the Gospel. By this Judas cast out devils, and yet he was a devil himself. Faith in all these senses we may possess, and yet be destitute of that which unites to Christ. So that in addition to these there is a justifying faith, called by the Apostle (Col. ii. 12) "the faith of the operation of God." This consists in believing "on the words of the Son of God." Its object is Christ crucified—Christ lifted up on the cross—and it implies the reliance and dependance of the soul on him for salvation, and the renunciation of our own righteousness as affording the least foundation for hope. Such is faith.

Here, as all will see, are interests of eternal importance involved. The subject of this justifying faith sees that he is to live for ever and under the wrath of Almighty God, and that the only way of escape from that wrath is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ he also sees that he may arise to glory, honor, immortality and eternal life in heaven. In the full expectation of the blessings promised in the Gospel, he fixes his mind and his dependance upon Christ; he follows him in all the ways of obedience, and esteems all things as dross and as dung that he may win Christ, and be found of him eventually prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light. And he would trample upon the glory of universal empire if opposed to his spiritual and eternal interests.

The great truths of religion, through faith, exert the same influence upon the mind as if they were perceived by the senses. It considers them as realities, and is suitably affected by them. Yes, such is the assurance which faith gives of the existence and magnitude of eternal things, that they often make a stronger impression on the minds of believers than is made by things visible and present. Hence, they renounce the pleasures of sin for the happiness promised by religion; they abandon the world as their portion in the expectation of the heavenly inheritance And the sacrifices which believers have often made and now do make, of ease, honor, wealth, friends, and even of life, are obvious and tangible proofs of the mighty power of faith. These are the trophies which adorn its triumphs. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Faith is the gift of God; is the effect of the exceeding greatness of his power. The spirit enlightens the mind, subdues the will, which, like a garrison, holds out against God, and, with a sweet violence, conquers and changes it; makes the sinner willing to have Christ on any terms, to be ruled by him as well as saved by him. What gold is among the metals, faith is among the graces, the most precious of them all. Indeed, the other graces have been called the daughters of faith.

In heaven, love will be the chief grace, but here faith is the primary one. Love is the crowning grace in heaven, but faith is the conquering grace on earth; and where there is no conquering there is no crowning. When faith once gains possession of the mind and soul it brings up a great many auxiliaries to its aid. It causes *love* to burn with a flame so intense as that nothing can quench it. Many waters cannot quench love. And faith worketh by love. And it excites *hope*, if not the strongest, yet the most enduring passion of our nature. Hope paints upon the darkest cloud of adversity a bow of promise of future prosperity and happiness. And faith calls up *patience of endurance*. We are commanded to "be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Faith believes the glorious rewards given to suffering. This makes the soul patient in suffering. Thus, if we may so express ourselves, faith is the main-spring, or the master wheel which sets all the other graces in motion. It makes things unseen and eternal the grand objects of human pursuit. It connects with Christ and secures his almighty aid in all its conflicts. It summons up to its aid every power of the mind and every affection of the heart, and gives new strength and courage to them all. It reckons that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which it is seeking. And without the least dismay it opposes itself to the world, and overcomes it.

We proceed.

SECONDLY. TO SHOW YOU HOW IT OVERCOMES THE WORLD.

By "the world," in our text, must be meant, of course, the influence of worldly motives and considerations; the opposition, of whatever kind, which the world presents. Every individual born of God is in conflict with the world; that is, with its enticements, and evil examples, and temptations, and opposition. All these things, and all similar things, are comprehended under the name "world." By a figure of speech it is sometimes put for unrenewed and wicked persons; as when the Saviour says, "If the *world* hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." And by a figure of speech it is also put for sensual lusts and pleasures, for the riches, honors, and dignities of the world. As when John says, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." But in our text all these things, and all other things which oppose themselves to the eternal interests of man, are included, and faith is said to overcome them all. And now as to the how it gains such a victory.

I. *Faith purifies the heart from those lusts and affections through which the world usually obtains dominion over us.* The first synod of the Christian Church was called in Jerusalem, for the purpose of settling the controversy which arose as to whether the Gentiles should be circumcised before their reception into the fellowship of the saints. Peter takes the ground that they should not, and for the reason that God bestowed upon Jews and Gentiles alike the Holy Ghost; *purifying their hearts by faith.* (Acts xv. 9.) And he rightly argued that,

where God makes no difference, we should not. The point, however, to which we wish to draw your attention, is the purifying influence which he ascribes to faith: "Purifying their hearts by faith."

Destitute of faith, we are under the influence of that evil trinity, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. There is that in our hearts upon which temptations from all these sources act, and through which they control us. Were it not for that thing in our hearts, these temptations would be powerless. Angels are entirely unaffected by the temptations and seductions which destroy men; and for the reasons that, in their holy natures, there is nothing upon which they can act. It is obvious, therefore, that, in the proportion our natures are freed from that thing upon which these act, we will be as unaffected by them as are angels. And one of the effects of faith is to purify the heart from that very thing. Faith is, in the soul, as fire among metals; it refines and purifies. The heart which, like the disturbed ocean, is ever casting up mire and dirt, is a stranger to faith. Faith is a heavenly plant that will not grow in an impure soil. Christ is its object, and it changes the soul into the image of Christ. A person deformed may look on a beautiful object without becoming beautiful; but faith, fixed upon Christ, transforms a man into his similitude. Looking on a bleeding Christ, begets a bleeding heart,—on a holy Christ, begets a holy heart,—on an humble Christ, begets an humble heart. As the cameleon is said to partake of the color of that upon which it is looking, so faith, looking on Christ, begets a moral likeness to Christ. And by thus purifying the heart from those lusts and affections which are native to it, the agents through which the world governs us are removed, and it has no longer dominion over us. But this is only driving the world from the heart, its strongest fortress; and whilst this is a wonderful gain upon its power, it has yet to be subdued.

II. *By faith we are led to entertain right views of the world.* It is by putting on false disguises, and by making false pretences, that the world deceives even its own votaries. Deceived by their deceitful hearts worldly men call the evil good and the good evil; they put darkness for light and light for darkness. And whilst thus deceived, they are out in the pursuit of the world as if it were the chief good. But one of the immediate effects of faith is, to take off this false disguise from the world, and to reveal its true character; and to open the eyes to a perception of that character. When this is done, the charm is dissolved. The world is now seen in its true colors, and its controlling influence is gone.

Faith is the Christian's telescope, through which he views things here and hereafter. Through it he plainly sees the infinite importance of things unseen and eternal above those which are seen and temporal, and the latter he counts as dross, that he may gain the former. A candle is welcomed as a great light by the man in a dungeon; it is only an encumbrance to a man walking in the light of the sun. And

such are the motives which earth presents to the man who, by faith, has gained right views of eternity. So infinitely below the heavenly do all earthly motives fall, that they scarcely receive consideration. The treasures of earth are all failing; the pleasures of earth are all unsatisfying. The honors of earth are but as the flowers of grass. And we ourselves are passing away from earth with the rapidity of the shooting star, which begins and ends its career almost within the same moment. And all this whilst the treasures and pleasures of heaven are enduring, and its life of ceaseless fruition as abiding as is the throne of God. Now, all this faith clearly and fully reveals to its possessor. And, hence, faith deprives the motives which the world presents of all power to influence; and if our former position drove the world from its strong fortress—the heart, this renders the weapons with which it afterwards annoys, powerless to hurt, and its seductive arts too weak to influence. This is a still further advance upon the world; but yet it has to be subdued.

III. *Faith overcomes the whole array of worldly motive and temptation.* It fixes its eye upon the recompense of reward, and it carves its way through the whole array of worldly influences which rise up to arrest its progress to the possession of that reward. To place this great idea before you we must descend to particulars.

What more alluring than the honors of the world;—and what lust exerts so powerful a sway as the burning ambition to attain them! What shipwreck has it made of character, peace, fortune; what oceans of blood has it shed! What fruitful plains has it converted to deserts! And yet faith has regarded the objects of this ambition as baubles too worthless for her to stoop to. "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Here, then, is faith trampling upon the lust of empire, and rejecting the most brilliant crown in the known world, because it came up in competition with the crown of glory.

And, in like manner, it has overcome the frowns and flatteries of the world. How often has principle been yielded in preference to bearing the frowns and persecutions of those above us. How few, in the presence of power and authority, ever have a mind of their own, when acting up to their most solemn convictions of right would expose to danger. What sacrifice of principle is there everywhere to frowns and to fears! But look at Joseph in the palace of Potiphar, and amid the court of Pharaoh! Witness the triumph of Daniel's faith in the court of Babylon, and that of his three companions, when the den of lions and the burning furnace were to be the rewards of its actings. When the command of the king was upon them to bow down to the idol set up, and the burning furnace was threatened as the punishment of their refusal, their faith in God enabled them to reply, "O king, we

are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand." Here, again, is faith trampling on the frowns and the flatteries of the world, and triumphing over them. It fears the anger of God incurred in swerving from the right so much more than the wrath of man in doing right;—it so estimates the divine approbation in abstaining from the wrong above the world's favor in doing the wrong, that it clings to the right and rejects the wrong at all hazards. Through frowns and flatteries it holds on the even tenor of its way.

Faith is even a stronger principle than the love of life itself. This love is proverbially the strongest principle native to the human bosom. What will not a man give in exchange for his life? What sacrifice is unwillingly made to preserve it? And yet faith, realising that laying down life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel is the way to save it, cheerfully meets death when obedience requires it. Indeed, until we hate life itself, that is, until we esteem its continuance far less than we do obedience to Christ, we cannot be his disciples. How cheerfully Daniel went to the den of lions, and the three Hebrew youths to the furnace, rather than deny God. Paul counted not his own life dear that he might win Christ. Apostles, prophets, martyrs, confessors, to plant the cross amid the wilds of superstition, endured all manner of hardships, and freely poured out their blood like water. They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain by the sword; and amid the tortures of crucifixion and the stake, faith enabled them to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. And here we see faith triumphing over the world, regarding its most fearful and deadly assaults with composure, and no more affected by them than is the ocean rock by the waves that dash and foam around it, and then go to sleep at its base.

Taking faith to represent the new nature which is communicated in regeneration, we see that all in whom it is found are made by it victorious over the world. They overcome their natural love for its honor, riches, pleasures, decorations and friendships, and their natural fear of the frowns, and the contempt, and the rage of men. So strongly does it connect with God, so powerfully does it tend to holiness, so clear and far reaching are its judgments, so heavenly are its affections, that it prepares for submission to losses, for the exercise of self-denial, and for the enduring of afflictions in the cause of God. It teaches to disregard the maxims, fashions, customs and opinions of an ungodly generation. True, the conflicts of faith with a corrupt nature are frequently sharp;—the new man may be at times cast down and overcome, and apparently slain; but the seed remaineth in him, and he rises again invigorated by the Spirit, and renews the conflict, and obtains the victory. So that to every individual who believes in Christ, the victory over the world is secured, unless the shield of faith can be torn away from him, and broken at his feet.

And has faith in any one recorded instance ever failed to overcome the world ultimately? Search the records of the past for such an instance. You will find lapses, and dark hours, and fearful forebodings scattered through the lives of the faithful; but can you find an instance of ultimate defeat? Ask the patriarchs who lived in the infancy of our world—and the prophets who revealed to men the will of God—and the Apostles who went out to the battle with idolatry, not counting their lives dear, so that they might plant the cross amid the wilds of superstition; and all these will say, with one heart and voice, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Ask the martyrs and the confessors of every generation—the saints who held fast to their profession on the rack and in the furnace—the noble champions who appeared in the days of a declining church, and at the price of their blood defended the pure doctrines of the Gospel; and all these of whom the world was not worthy, will say with an emphasis as sincere as it is emphatic, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And a similar testimony comes up from thousands in the more private walks of life, who, having taken Christ as their everlasting portion, and in dependence upon his might, have gone unobtrusively through duty and trial, and then lain down on a dying bed, and who, smiling amid the decayings of the body, have triumphantly exclaimed, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; and now thanks be unto God who hath given us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

And faith in God is the same triumphant principle now that it has ever been. It has lost none of its power to overcome by use and exercise. And it is now overcoming the world as gloriously (though less conspicu usly) as it did in the case of Moses, or of Daniel, or even of Paul. And were there another pen equally inspired and powerful to insert in the history of the Church, another such chapter as is the eleventh of Hebrews, there could be collected from the history of the Reformation, and from the history of modern missions, an array of holy men, who, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, fall, in the strength and the triumphs of faith, but little below the noble company of worthies placed in such glorious array by the Apostle of the Gentiles. Wherein does a Luther, at Worms, fail in comparison with Moses under the frowns of Pharaoh—or with Joshua, contending with the Amalekites? Wherein do a Morrison and a Carey fall below Abraham in faith, who went out from his own country not knowing whither he went? And wherein do a Brainerd and a Martyn, all circumstances considered, differ from a Paul or a Peter, in the actings of their faith? It is said, that before and after Agamemnon, there were greater heroes than he, but they had no Homer to sing their deeds in undying numbers; and they are unnamed and unknown. And other things being equal, both before and since the Apostles, there were and have been triumphs of faith equal to theirs, but there was no inspired pen to place them on an inspired page. And why should it not be so? Is not faith the same principle now that it has ever been? Are not

its objects the same? And are not we all such as were Moses, and Daniel, and Paul, and the other worthies whose names adorn the records of the Church? And is not an opposing world the same in its oppositions? And why should the triumphs of faith materially differ? They do not differ except in their degrees. Oh, it is withering to the efforts of faith, and enfeebling to all our spiritual powers, even to imagine that faith cannot accomplish now what it ever has; that it cannot triumph over the world now, as it ever has done. And as every victory gained by a general and his army only inspires their courage, and animates their hopes that in the next engagement they will be also successful; so the successive victories obtained by faith over the world in all ages and countries, should only animate our valor and dissipate all fear that the laurels of faith shall ever entwine and decorate the brows of the world.

Let us all then remember that heaven is the reward of victory—that victory supposes a conflict—that conflict supposes an enemy, and that that enemy is the world. And this is an omnipresent enemy, the perfect master of all feints and disguises, and of all deceivableness of unrighteousness. But with the shield of faith we need not fear its attacks. This guards us on the right hand and on the left. If now overcome, it is because of the weakness of faith, and instead of giving over the battle as lost, cry to heaven for an increase of faith, and rise again to the combat. Let every day witness an increase of your faith, and a renewal of the battle. And soon, with the world under your feet, and the song of triumph on your lips, you will be enabled to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Thanks be unto God who hath given me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord." And when the day of final reward has arrived,

"Oh, that each in that day
May be able to say,
I have fought my way through,
I have finish'd the work thou didst give me to do;
Oh, that each from his Lord
May receive the glad word,
Well and faithfully done,
Enter into my joys and sit down on my throne."

SERMON CCCLXVII.

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TRUTH AND ITS TRIUMPHS.

"Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you."—2 Thess. iii. 1.

In obedience to the call of the heavenly vision, the Apostle Paul had been into Macedonia, and stationed himself at Thessalonica, the ancient metropolis of that province. Here he had preached in his accustomed plainness and power "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Multitudes, guided by its light, had emerged from the darkness of pagan idolatry. The sensualist had become chaste; the inebriate temperate; the covetous, munificent; the proud, humble; and the votary of idols, the worshipper of the living God. Under its power he had also seen the obdurate heart of the Jew break with penitence, and his faith and hope in the despised Nazarene confirmed.

In view of the wonderful success of the Gospel among them, the Apostle commences his first epistle to them in language of devout praise and thanksgiving: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the sight of God our Father: knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith to Godward is spread abroad."

Such were the triumphant effects of the Gospel preached to the Jews and idolators of Thessalonica. The Apostle having gathered them into a church, left them, and went out to publish the truth in other places. In this second epistle, sent to them from Athens, he solicits, among other things, their fervent prayers that *the Gospel might have free course and be glorified, even as with them.* Mark, he does not ask them to pray that the Gospel might have imparted to it any inherent power

which it did not already possess; he only asks their prayers that the simple truth as committed to them by Christ might have *free course*—might run unobstructed—and its legitimate influence upon the hearts and lives of men would show itself to be glorious truth. Unhindered, its enlightening, renovating, transforming power upon the entire character and condition of man is as certain as the succession of light to the rising of the sun. It will carry along with itself convincing proof of its divine original, and illumine its own course by its brilliant victories over every species of error and delusion.

The sentiment of the text may therefore be embraced in these two propositions: *The truth is glorified by its effects; and its effects are commensurate with its opportunities to produce them.*

I. *The truth is glorified by its effects.* The unadulterated word of God is truth, and is that in which a heavenly mind takes peculiar delight. Its moral beauty and sweetness find a corresponding affection in every holy and devout heart. Said the Psalmist concerning the statutes of the Lord, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb." "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day!" But this is a love of truth for its own sake, abstractly considered. We are in this discourse to contemplate it, as we do other objects, by its *properties* or *effects.* Viewed in this light, the word of the Lord is seen to be truly glorious.

1. The truth is glorified by its effects on the *community.* It contemplates men as social beings, and as such is adapted to all their wants. What community is so ignorant that it may not enlighten? or so degraded that it may not elevate? or so lost in the general apostacy that it may not redeem and bless? Other expedients have been tried upon communities and nations, thus ignorant and degraded, and scarcely any redeeming power has been exerted. And the glorious effects of Gospel truth are best seen in contrast with the total inefficiency of these expedients.

Civilisation has long been deemed by some to be fully adequate to relieve the community of its evils. But its conflict with them has only demonstrated its impotency. In spite of its influence, mankind have been ignorant of their highest good, and slaves to the worst passions of the human breast. It has not the power even to disinthral the mind from the worst forms of superstition and idolatry, as evinced in the ancient empires of the eastern world; nor from the most flagrant violations of divine law and human rights, as seen to exist amid all the monuments of the most refined modern, civil, and social improvements. *A cultivation of the intellect*, and a general diffusion of knowledge among the people, have been urged by many to be the only redeeming expedient that can raise a nation to its highest possible elevation. There is, if we mistake not, an overweening fondness, at the present day, of relying upon this expedient to cure the evils of society. Important as general learning may be, it can never remedy the moral evil [illegible] art. Mere intellect has no moral characteristics, and

under its highest cultivation every species of licentiousness and crime have flourished. Again, in *free institutions*, others have thought that they had found a panacea for all the wrongs of the community. But sober facts will demolish all these creations of the fancy. Dear as civil and religious liberty may be, still we are made painfully to feel that a people in the full enjoyment of them may be subject to all the malign influence of party, and to the control of the basest passions of the human heart; thus presenting the curious anomaly of external freedom with internal slavery. Others, again, boast of *philosophy* as adequate to reform a community. But here let Cicero speak. "Do you think," says he, "that those precepts of morality had any influence, except in a very few instances, upon the men who speculated, wrote, and disputed concerning them? No: who is there, of all the philosophers, whose mind and manners were conformed to the dictates of right reason? Who of them ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not merely an occasion of displaying his own ingenuity? On the contrary, many of them have been slaves to the vilest lusts." And if philosophy failed to reform philosophers themselves, how wretched must have been the mass of the community on whom it shed no light! Others, again, discover a regenerating influence in the *mechanic arts*. The world is to be raised from its depressed state by steam power, to the great disparagement of Archimedes's lever. But there is no railway to national prosperity, nor to morals, nor to the kingdom of heaven. Ah! say others, we have made the great discovery; *non-resistance, no-human government;* here is the wonderful, the long-sought catholicon! Pandora's box rather, out of which are issuing a thousand nameless evils. Nor has the community found any relief in the various systems of *infidelity*. The horrid scenes of the French revolution, with their legitimate fruits of licentiousness, cruelty, and blood, are historical records, and no nation will ever again run the fearful hazard, by its legislative acts, of thrusting out the Bible, the Sabbath, and the God of heaven! Atheism and infidelity, instead of giving freedom and happiness to the French, only uncapped the volcano which poured its desolations over the land. Nothing healing, regenerating, and saving, has ever issued from these systems of human device. Nor is *paganism* any better. Idolatry is associated with nothing in principle but corruption, and nothing in practice scarcely but unutterable abominations. As for *Mahomedanism*, it scarcely sheds one ray of rational hope for man. Its essential elements are sensuality, scorn, revenge, war. Of benevolence, kindness, and humanity, it knows comparatively nothing. The true condition of those countries that are cursed with Islamism, is the best illustration of its genius and legitimate influence. Nor is there any hope from *Romanism;* if any, the world would long ago have found it out. The past history of this politico-religious organization furnishes the best comment upon its present character and designs. It is enough for us to know that it is a medley of Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity corrupted: and hence unauthorized of Heaven, and inade-

quate to meet the wants of guilty, ignorant, fallen humanity. It is an old repudiated system, in its last struggles for existence, and its apparent revival at this time, like the dying spark, is only a premonition of its approaching end. And the community may look in vain for relief from *Puseyism*, which is Romanism in its second edition; or from *Parkerism*, Unitarianism transcendentalized; or from *Universalism*, fatalism refined; or from *Fourierism*, Owenism sublimated; or from *Mormonism*, human folly concentrated; or from any other *ism* that may rise up and float awhile like scum upon the surface of the community.

Where, then, may society look for help? *To the Gospel of Jesus Christ, pure and unadulterated.* Let it have *free course*, let it pervade the nation; let it come home to the bosoms and business of men; let its doctrines and precepts, in their plainness and simplicity, be obeyed by all, and the community would receive its highest possible elevation in all that is great and good. It is man's bill of rights sent down to him from heaven, which appropriately secures to him every natural, moral, intellectual, civil, domestic, religious and immortal interest. It secures to individuals their rights and immunities, and all that purity, elevation, and refinement of character of which they are susceptible in this life, and ultimate alliance to angels in the world to come. Hence it must impart to the community, which is composed of individuals, a corresponding elevation and refinement. It forms for it a correct conscience, gives sanction to its laws, aids in the administration of justice, fosters every humane and benevolent institution, aims at the emancipation of the oppressed, and would secure to all the greatest possible amount of happiness. All this is implied in its divine origin. And hence, to doubt its competency to produce these blessed results, and resort to other expedients, is a virtual impeachment of the claims of the Gospel to divine authenticity. But give us the Gospel, *the pure Gospel*, THE WHOLE GOSPEL, and its own brilliant conquests over sin, error, and superstition, will proclaim its heavenly birth, and its adaptedness to all the wants of man in his social relations. To admit its divine origin, and then call in question its efficacy to produce these results, is an implied impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of its Author.

2. The truth of God is glorified by its effects upon the *family compact*. The domestic institution is from God. "He taketh the solitary and setteth him in families." And he designed that it should be the nursery of all the social and moral virtues, and where should commingle and flow out all the sweet charities of life. But the true source of domestic happiness is found in practical religion, and not in the flowery regions of the fancy. "The secret of happiness lies folded up in the leaves of the Bible, and is carried in the bosom of religion." In "the word of the Lord" all the relative duties of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, master and servant, are plainly taught and enforced. And where all the members of the household are cemented together by religious affection, and revolve harmoniously around one common centre of heavenly attraction, they attain to the highest degree of domestic felicity. The effect of the apostacy was to separate

mankind from God, and this prepared the way for disunion among themselves. The effect of the Gospel, attended by the Spirit, is first to unite them to God, and then to one another. Natural affection, cemented by the true spirit of Christianity, forms therefore the only proper basis of the family compact. What place this side of heaven more strikingly resembles it in blessedness, than a family thus united by love and sanctified by grace? The word of God inculcates the duty of *family prayer*. Accordingly, what scene is more morally beautiful than that where the father and mother gather about them their beloved offspring, read the inspired volume, unite in a sacred song of praise, in which perhaps infant voices sweetly blend, and then, with deep devotion invoke the blessing of Abraham's God? The Bible also enjoins *that the love of husband and wife be mutual and sincere*, and that all the duties growing out of this endeared relation be faithfully performed. Accordingly, this injunction has restored to the wife that place in the family constitution which her Creator originally designed her to fill;—to be the companion and not the slave of man. While in nations which lie beyond the pale of Christianity, she is robbed of her rights, and reduced to a state of abjectness and servitude. It also teaches *parental duties*, which, if faithfully performed, secure to the children that early moral and religious training so necessary to stamp them with the seal of Heaven, and prepare them for the responsibilities of this life, and for the higher employments of the life which is to come. Thus the Gospel of Christ would plant the domestic field with everything that is morally beautiful. It would secure to the family constitution its highest possible excellence, and influence, together with the blessings of a covenant God, through successive generations. We may trace the history of many a family in which the Gospel has radiated its light, and "show it to be like a pure and vigorous stream, urging its course through a turbid lake, with the waters of which it refuses to blend, and maintaining its own characteristic amidst surrounding impurity."

3. The truth is glorified by its effects on *individual character*. It finds man in a state of condemnation, cast out from the favor of God, weltering in his morbid pollutions, and exposed to eternal death. Her voice is to all without distinction; to men of every color, climate, and condition; to the sunburnt African, the stupid Hindoo, the fur-clad Esquimaux, and to the more polished European; to the sick and the despairing; to the convict and to the slave; to the rich and to the poor. She impairs no faculty, prohibits no rational enjoyment, inflicts no suffering; but, finding man in his depravity and wickedness, she offers him, upon easy terms, salvation, peace, and eternal blessedness. Nor does she offer this in vain. The experiment has been in progress for ages, is now passing before our eyes, and when fairly tried, has never, in a single instance, failed to redeem her pledges.

The reason is, because the truths of Christianity are in every respect adapted to the nature and character of man ruined by sin. Unlike any other system of religion, she reveals to him his immortality,—the

value of his soul; stamps new interest on all his acts and relations; points him to a more exalted state of being, and binds him to eternity. Nor does she leave him here. She warns him of immortality, but does not assure him that he will, as a matter of course, be blessed in that immortality. He is made to know that he has offended against the laws of Heaven, has violated infinite obligations, and deserves to be punished eternally; but that infinite Wisdom has, notwithstanding, found a ransom. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here he learns how the legal difficulty in the way of his salvation is removed, and pardon to the guilty is offered. His faith takes hold of divine, precious, peace-giving blood. His fears of wrath to come are dispelled. He can look with composure at eternity, and contemplate his immortality with joy.

But he feels another difficulty still; it is one deeply seated in the heart. His affections are misplaced; his will is perverse; his passions are disordered. Philosophy and learning had proffered their aid to cure these evils, but to no effect. He had watched, and prayed, and fasted, and vowed, and travelled through the whole course of devout austerities, and still the plague of his heart continued to rage and burn. And why not? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Then may impurity purify itself. Here, again, the Gospel speaks to him in renovating, sanctifying tones. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Here all his inward difficulties are removed. What was impossible with man was possible with God. What a change! The burden upon his soul is gone. He stands redeemed complete in Christ, and looks forward in hope to a blessed immortality. He is now a child on earth devoted to the skies. Whereas he was once blind, he now sees; once deaf, he now hears; once a slave, he is now free; once grovelling in the dust, he is now destined to be exalted a a king and a priest unto God for ever. How transforming, how triumphant the effect of truth on individual character!

4. The truth is glorified by its effects on *individual happiness.* There exists a strong innate desire for happiness in every soul. The soul loves its own existence, and is ever in search of some real or supposed good to render that existence happy. And you might as well deprive it of its being, as its blessedness. It is true, that in the present degeneracy and derangement of human nature, this strong and unceasing desire for happiness is greatly perverted and misplaced. Man seeks his enjoyments in sinful and created objects, forgetful of the uncreated fountain of all true bliss. But still he presses forward in his pursuit; still this innate impetus is predominant, and though he mistakes the means, he still retains his steady aim at the end. He resorts

to every expedient, makes every effort, until he feels that every offer the world makes is only a fraud committed upon his credulity in her competency to satisfy ; that she has only mocked his desires with *very vanities*. Still he pines for some substantial good. The Gospel shows him his sad mistake: that he has "forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewn to him broken cisterns that can hold no water;" and then reveals to him the wells of salvation, from which he may draw and be satisfied; where he may slake his immortal thirst with streams ever sweet, refreshing, and inexhaustible. It reveals to him also that *living bread* which came down from Heaven, and bids him eat, and live for ever. It is enough. His wants are all supplied. His heart has found a resting-place upon substantial, uncreated good. He exclaims, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" Truth has again triumphed.

5. The truth of God *shines resplendent amid scenes of dissolution.* All have sinned, and hence all must die. In spite of our philosophy, death must be viewed as the prince of earthly evils. It is no trifling matter to bid farewell to these bodies which have attended us on our pilgrimage; which we have fostered and adorned with such unremitting care, and consign them to darkness, corruption, and worms. Nature shudders at the prospect of separation, and shrinks from the grasp of the king of terrors. The soul, too, trembles as she looks forward into the dark profound of futurity, and contemplates her immortality. She is filled with wild conjectures and evil forebodings, until the Gospel inspires her with *a good hope through grace.* Then the divine promises cast the rainbow of peace athwart the cloud. The thunders of Sinai cease to alarm ; the lightnings that played upon its top cease to terrify; life and immortality, ever fresh and blooming, cheer her prospects. The Gospel reveals to her that even this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality ; that death shall be swallowed up in victory, and she is at rest amid the pains of dissolution. And having reached the heavenly shore, she can look back from her redeemed, exalted state; and from amidst the triumphs which faith has wrought, exclaim, *O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!*

Again, 6. The soul sanctified through the truth, redeemed out of all the ruins of the apostacy, out of all the darkness of sin, stands upon the hills of heavenly light, adorned with the seamless robes of a Redeemer's righteousness, and with palms of victory in her hand, joins in the doxology of ceaseless honors to his name. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and blessing!" In this matured work of redemption, the word of God stands resplendent with glory, and all human devices to meet the wants of the soul sink into contempt. Your attention is now invited to my

II. Proposition, namely, *that the effects of the truth will ever be commensurate with its opportunity to produce them.*

The transforming, glorious effects of truth upon the character and

conduct of men, are rendered certain, not only by their adaptedness to his moral nature, but by the infallible promise of God, that his word shall not return unto him void. And these effects are not only certain, but proportionate to the opportunity which the truth has to exert its legitimate influence. Christianity has always struggled against powerful obstacles. The civil arm was arrayed against its Author, and wielded with terrible effect upon his rising Church. Through ten long persecutions, inflicted by imperial power and titled wrath, she sighed, and groaned, and bled, and still she flourished. Like the bush of Horeb, she stood amidst the flames, unconsumed. And when, at length, she ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and seemed to triumph, it was only for a short period. Other trials awaited her. She had become popular, and multitudes rushed to her embrace, who proved to be enemies in disguise. With the purity of her spirit, principles, and institutions, they had no fellowship at heart. They could endure the alliance only by secularizing her institutions, corrupting her principles, and vitiating her spirit. Hence the flood of worldliness, error, and superstition which deluged her, until her light was extinguished, and her glory obscured. And when, under the efforts of the reformers of the sixteenth century, she revived and threw off the lumber of ages, and appeared once more in her primitive character, and began to breathe the air of freedom, and gird herself for the race, she must grapple again with hostile influences, and sometimes with most bitter and bloody persecution. The inquisitorial fires were lighted, heresies arose, and secret foes, under the cold formalities of religion, paralyzed her energies. Thus she had to contend with enemies within and without, secret and open. There were times when her course seemed to be free and unobstructed, and then she would multiply her victories, and cover herself with glory. And this she would always do were there no physical obstacles to impede her march. Wherein, then, consists the truth's opportunity?

1. *It must be preached.* You need not be told, my brethren, that it is God's settled arrangement to convert the world by the foolishness of preaching. There are *two* obvious reasons why he has committed the heavenly treasure to earthen vessels. One is, that "the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us;" and the other is, because man is evidently the most proper agency to be employed in the salvation of man. The point is settled, that the Divine plan involves a human agency consecrated specifically to the work of preaching the Gospel. In his government over the Church, he has himself adhered strictly to this plan. The living ministry is his own institution, and he has been pleased to honor it by making it the chief instrumentality in the salvation of our race. The truth, as it proceeds from the lips of the preacher, is attended with an energy and power to awaken the mind, impress the heart, and move the affections, which it does not possess when presented by other means. Truth, printed and read, does good, and, in some instances, great good, and almost the only good; but truth preached by lips touched by a live coal from God's altar, is what

he is pleased to honor most in achieving his victories over sin. Say the missionaries at the Sandwich Islands: "We rejoice in the disposition which exists in our country to supply the heathen with the word of God. We should regret deeply to check it. We cannot, however, refrain from saying that our hope of the speedy conversion of the world to Christ would be greatly increased could we hear of the almost clamorous importunity of the churches, not only to print the Bible, but to furnish men to teach it to all nations. The Scriptures sometimes convert men who have no preacher, and tracts have brought salvation to families who have never seen the Bible; but, ordinarily, it is not so; ordinarily, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God as spoken by the living preacher. To scatter Bibles and tracts where there is no living ministry, is, in the figure of Robert Hall, "throwing sickles into a field of grain, with no men to wield them." A few straws may be cut down by a random throw, but the harvest will never be gathered, and the sheaves brought home with joy, unless the sickles are wielded by the living hand. The Gospel of the kingdom must be *preached*. "Go ye into the world and *preach* the Gospel." In this command of the Great Head of the Church, we have a plain intimation what is his will; what agency he would peculiarly honor in the conversion of the world.

2. The Gospel must be preached with *clearness, simplicity, and power*. Great plainness of speech becomes the ambassador for God. He is bound not only to present to the rebel against the government of Heaven the terms of reconciliation, but to do it in a manner that is intelligible. To preach the truth in obscure and unintelligible terms, is much the same as not to preach it at all. So did Paul understand it. "In the church," he says, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that with my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Language may be used that will be as ambiguous and unintelligible as the mutterings of the Delphic oracle, but it always implicates either the head or the heart of the preacher. Incapacity to clothe his message in acceptable and appropriate words that will convey a clear and definite idea, or solemn trifling with the truths committed to him for dispensation, are either of them disqualifications for his office. If he first obtains a clear conception of the truth he is to communicate, and loves that truth, and feels that solemn import of his message, he will be likely to be plain and perspicuous in its delivery. "I believe, therefore do I speak," said the Apostle, and hence his precision and power. "Earnestness, perspicuity, directness, simplicity, and force are the natural products of an inward conviction." We must be self-convicted of what we would convict others. If we would uncover the pit and describe its horrors, we need first to feel something of its pains in a wounded spirit. If we would paint the joys of pardoned sin, we need first to experience the blessedness of salvation. Would we describe to others the glories that bud on the cross of Christ, we need first to sit down at its foot, and let its blood fall on us, and diffuse its healing powers through the soul.

Would we direct the eye of the sinner upward, and attempt to delineate the ineffable glories of the heavenly world? we must first experience the exultation of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped" for, and the gushings of that love which is the foretaste of eternal joys. We may utter the language of the Holy Ghost, but if we do not utter it as the language of our own souls, embued with its spirit, and warmed by its fire, it will be like the indistinct pratings of a parrot. When we stand up "to justify the ways of God to man," we should have an object to gain, and that a definite, all-important one, *the salvation of the soul*, and then shall we press towards it in language which is clothed with invincible power. Paul was eloquent and powerful when he stood before King Agrippa and made his noble defence of the Christian faith. And why? because he spoke what he knew, and testified what he had seen. His was the language of experience, of the *soul*, and it opened an avenue to the royal heart, and drew out the response, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He stood before Felix also, and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." The governor trembled. Why? because the Apostle's language possessed the clearness, directness, and power of experience, and entered his very soul. The first preachers of the Gospel were preeminently men of God; their souls were baptized with the Holy Ghost; they had tasted of the powers of the world to come; and were inflamed by the motives and affections of a sanctifying religion. They were great in prayer, and held in their hands the key which unlocked the treasures of divine grace. Hence, under the first distinctive Gospel sermon preached, three thousand were converted. They hurled among the people the shafts of truth with boldness and precision; and winged with the prayer of faith, they took terrible effect in the hearts of the murderers of the Son of God. The secret of their success is found in the concise biography of Barnabas, "He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord." Who in modern times have preached the Gospel with distinguished success? Your minds will recur for an answer to such men as Howe, and Flavel, and Baxter, and Doddridge, and Whitfield, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Payson, names of blessed memory.

They preached it in deep self-conviction of its truth; in certain modes of feeling and action which harmonized with the mind of the Spirit, and which were the result of walking with God. They often went into the audience-chamber of the Great King, bearing the names of their people on their breast-plate. It is said that Dr. Livingston of Scotland spent the whole night in prayer previous to his preaching that celebrated sermon which resulted in the conversion of five hundred individuals. Thus spiritually taught, he was prepared to teach others the great truths which fired his own mind. Would we, my brethren, preach the Gospel with like power and effect, we must study our sermons upon our knees, and consecrate them with fervent prayer to the glory of God.

Again, 3. The Gospel must be preached *abundantly*. Its most

triumphant results are witnessed where its claims are most frequently and extensively urged upon the attention of mankind. The king of day, as he first ascends above the horizon, sheds his rays obliquely and scantily upon the earth, and the darkness of night is not completely dissipated till he towers towards the meridian and pours a full tide of light over the face of creation. In like manner, where our beloved missionaries have begun to preach the glorious Gospel, the sun of righteousness lets fall a few rays, and the effects are comparatively happy. But the light is intercepted by obstacles, and the reign of pagan darkness continues. Now let the light have *free course;* let it pour in one unbroken tide upon those lands, and who can conceive of the glory that would follow! We know that the spot in which has been concentrated the greatest amount of Gospel light, has been the most blessed. The human mind has emerged from its darkness, and put forth powers and energies before unknown, a sanctified literature and science have succeeded to the wild and uncertain vagaries of superstition, and of a darkened understanding; the arts of civilisation are inducing habits of industry, and are beginning to multiply their comforts and conveniences; and multitudes, who were but yesterday pagans, ignorant, besotted, and cruel, are now rejoicing in the light of truth, and in the hope of the glory of God. Nor is there a nook of earth too remote, or too dark, or too diseased by sin, to be reached by the light, and healed by the beams of the sun of righteousness. Only multiply those beams, and concentrate that light upon any spot however dark, and dreary, and cold, and the plants of holiness will spring up and flourish, and paradise will be restored with its charms, and its tree of life.

We have seen in our own congregations, when the plain pungent truths of the Gospel are pressed upon the conscience, during a succession of days, the hardest heart melted into deep contrition. Place the most unfeeling and obdurate sinner in the focus of divine rays, and hold him there long enough, and unless he be reprobate, he will melt and mould into the moral image of Christ. We have seen results like these during the last few months, until our hearts have rejoiced in the fact that nothing is impossible with God; that "his word is like a fire and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces."

But if we would see the Gospel exert its most subduing, sweeping influence upon the world, its principles must be practically applied to all the conduct of men, and to all the various relations of life. It must be preached not only abundantly, and applied to correct false principles, and misdeeds less flagrant and mischievous, but be made to grasp those combined, giant, heaven-daring iniquities which are filling the earth with suffering, oppression, and blood. The world will never be purified of its enormous, wholesale crimes, so long as the Church and her ministry view them with indifference. Never, no, *never* will this world be reclaimed, while a Gospel is preached that condemns the lesser evils only in the detail, and spares intemperance, slavery, and war, these giant systems of iniquity which originate some and foster

all subordinate crimes. The true Gospel refuses to tolerate sin in any of its forms, or under any supposable circumstances. And if we would behold Christianity making more rapid progress towards the accomplishment of her noble purposes to convert the world, we must appreciate her aggressive character, and her power to demolish sin in its strongholds, and in all its combined operations. The pulpit must thunder its anathemas "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," whether connived at by the Church, or fortified by law, or sanctioned by custom, or enrobed with purple and made to sit in high places. It must wage a fearless war with moral evil wherever, and under whatever form or relation it may be found; and spare nothing which emanates from the pit, and exalts itself against God. I hasten to remark,

4. If the Church would behold the triumphant march of truth, it must be attended by *the special operations of the Holy Spirit.* It must never be overlooked, that the truth is only the *instrument* by which the Spirit renews and sanctifies the heart of the sinner. "If I were as eloquent as the Holy Spirit," said one, "I could regenerate sinners as well as he." Meaning evidently this: "Could I lay the truth clearly before the mind, I need do nothing more, the Holy Spirit needs do nothing more, the truth would do the rest." This is giving to truth divine attributes and honor, and robbing God of the glory due to him. And this is one important reason why the preaching of the word is attended with so little comparative success. The means have been magnified to the disparagement of the Divine Agent. Hence he withholds his blessing, disappoints their misplaced confidence, and rebukes their presumption. He shows them that he will not give his glory to the instruments by which he works. The truth itself may shed light on the understanding and convict of sin, but, under its mightiest efforts, the heart remains unreconciled and unchanged. Regeneration is, therefore, not produced by the power of truth, or by the force of motives, as erroneously affirmed by Pelagius, but is the product of the Holy Spirit operating through the truth, and in perfect consistency with the nature of moral action, and the laws of moral agency. The Spirit makes use of the truth in his gracious work, and hence says the Apostle, "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," and that we are "begotten with the word of truth." And because human agency is employed to present that truth, the same apostle says to the Corinthians, "For in Christ Jesus *I* have begotten you through the Gospel."

We can at once perceive the importance of truth in the hands of the Spirit. In the light of it men perceive their obligations to obey God; their guilt and ruin and only remedy, and how to apply it. Still the Bible abounds with passages which bring into view the official work of the Spirit as *direct*, and *supernatural*, and peculiarly *his own*. It speaks of an influence exerted *upon* the heart, independent, as to efficiency, of the truth. Hence we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "That the *Lord opened the heart* of Lydia, that she attended unto the

things which were spoken of Paul." Again we read, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy *he* saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" And we are not only required, but it is the spontaneous feeling of the renewed heart to render to God all the praise of our salvation.

Our experience, my brethren, has also taught us that all that we can do is to prophesy over the dry bones; to impart to them life, is the peculiar work of the Spirit. It is ours to plant and water, and God's to give the increase. The truth we preach will only strike the tables of the heart and rebound as from a wall of adamant, unless God opens it and gives the word admission. This done, and how readily does it enter, and melt its frost, and burn up its errors, and sweep away its objections! We have seen the mighty operations of this Divine Agent during the past season. How He travelled in his strength through our congregations, transforming the rock to flesh, the tiger to the lamb; and when we pressed the sinner with his obligations and demerits, and urged him to a Saviour's arms, how readily did he yield, and how soon did he feel a Saviour's embrace of love!

Our missionary brethren have also beheld with joy unspeakable, his stupendous operations in heathen lands. Moral changes have passed under their eye which cannot be ascribed to any human agency. An influence, supernatural and divine, has moved upon the face of this great deep of human depravity. What but this has wrought those wonderful moral changes in the islands of the Pacific, in Ceylon, in Africa, among the Armenians of Constantinople, and the red men upon our borders? The Spirit gives to the word invincible power over prejudices the most inveterate, over ignorance, and errors, and superstitions the most deeply rooted.

Our subject brings to view the *responsibility* of the Church. 1. *To remove the physical obstacles which lie in the way to the progress of the truth.* We have seen that the Gospel must be *preached;* that it must be preached with *clearness*, *simplicity*, and *power;* and that it must be preached *abundantly*, if we would see it glorified by a harvest of rich fruits. The inference is, therefore, clear as light, that the Church is under pressing, *crushing* obligations to supply the world at once with an evangelical, thoroughly educated, devoted ministry, who shall run to and fro in the earth, and pour a blaze of truth on mankind. Sure am I that this is what is now wanting to send the light of life throughout those wide and barren regions of the West and South over which now blow the pestilential blasts of sin and infidelity; to send moral health through every artery and vein of the body politic; and make the songs of redemption echo from every hill and through every vale, and along by every shore of this revolted world. Said Nelson to his men, when on the eve of battle, "England expects that every man will do his duty." The Great Head of the Church expects that every man will do his duty. If we mistake not the indications of prophecy

and providence, we are on the eve of a brighter day than has ever radiated our world. The elements of revolutions are rapidly combining, and changes vast and momentous are maturing, that will hasten the predicted period of the universal and final triumph of the Redeemer's Kingdom. And we have arrived at that juncture when the worst that can be done is to be indifferent and inactive. Points of duty are settled, the work is commenced, facilities are multiplying, and the Church have only to remove all physical obstacles, and give to truth free course, and the issue cannot be doubtful. "From infidelity, or false religion, the cause has nothing to fear. From the magnitude of the work, or its inherent difficulties—nothing. From persecution or opposing powers—nothing." Let the church combine her energies to give to the world such a ministry as heaven will approve, who will fear nothing but sin, and serve nothing but Christ and his cause. Let the Church contemplate her commission: "Go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel to every creature;" ler her pray over it, and ponder it in her heart, until she drinks in its spirit, and understands the length and breadth, height and depth of the responsibilities it imposes. Let her supply all necessary collateral instrumentalities—let the press scatter its healing leaves—let science and civilisation contribute their aid, but let them revolve around the peculiar institution of Heaven,—the ministry of reconciliation,—the preaching of the everlasing Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. In short, let the Church lay herself upon the altar of sacrifice, and let the fire from heaven descend, kindle and consume the offering, and her triumphs are certain and complete.

Finally,—Our subject urges upon us the responsibility of removing as far as possible every *moral obstruction* to the progress of the truth. So far as obstacles may lie in the want of greater spirituality, faith, zeal, consecration and prayer, we are most solemnly bound by our vows, by our knowledge of duty, by the worth of souls, by the preciousness of Christ's blood, to remove them at once. Especially are we bound to besiege the throne of grace with the importunity of Jacob, that the Holy Spirit may attend the preaching of the word, and give it invincible powers over the hearts and lives of mankind. *Brethren, pray for us*, said the Apostle, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified. He believed in the efficacy of prayer; he knew it by experience; he had felt its sanctifying influence upon his own soul; and had witnessed gracious answers from the divine throne. In this power with God lay the secret of his splendid career. And here, my brethren, is our hope of success. What wonders will not a covenant God achieve when we draw upon his benevolent heart in prayer! What obstructions to the progress of truth will he not remove! What mind so darkened that he will not enlighten! What heart so hard that he cannot melt! What love of this world so ardent that he cannot cool! What unbelief so inveterate that he cannot dislodge! What grasp of covetousness that he cannot unclinch! Brethren beloved in the ministry, let not the word be hindered, the cause of Christian benevolence droop, the Church languish, and souls go away to

weep and wail for ever in the prison of despair, because we give not ourselves unto prayer, *believing, prevailing prayer.* Neglect this duty, and our thoughts are sensualized, our discourses breathe no life-giving spirit; our lives are assailable, and all our ministrations are sadly misdirected, if not perverted. "For Zion's sake, then, hold not your peace, for Jerusalem's sake rest not, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

It is, I trust, with no ordinary feelings of gratitude to God that we are again permitted to assemble from our field of labor, to this seat of sacred science, made deeply interesting to us by a thousand delightful associations. Here we prayed and wept as we looked out upon the dying world. Here we buckled on the armor and prepared to go forth to the great battle with sin and error. With what courage, and faithfulness, and success we have engaged in the conflict, our Great Captain will reveal to us when the war is ended. We have shared in the responsibilities, labors, trials, honors, and happiness of preaching the everlasting Gospel to our fallen race. And we have now come to inquire, "watchmen, what of the night?" to exchange also our congratulations, blend our sympathies, and kindle anew at this altar our fraternal love. Nor will we forget, amid the pleasures of this occasion, to speak of those whom we loved,—with whom we have taken sweet counsel,—but who have finished their work on earth, and gone before us to receive their reward in heaven. Nor can we forget to drop a tear on that newly made grave which has just received the remains of our honored and beloved father.* If prayer offered to God without ceasing could have held him back from the grave; if professional skill could have warded off the fatal blow; if great intellectual and moral worth could have prevailed with the king of terrors; or if agonized conjugal and filial affection could have shielded him in her embrace, our venerated friend and teacher had not died; a throb of indescribable anguish would not have smote the heart of that institution, and hung its consecrated walls with curtains of black; nor would the Church of God be now pouring out floods of grief, because a great and good man has fallen in Israel. But who, since the dying agonies are over, would call back the sainted spirit from his crown and harp? Much as we loved him, and wide as is the breach made by his departure, we would rejoice in his victory and triumph; and while we are looking into the heavens whither he has gone, and cry, *my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, may a double portion of his spirit, and his mantle fall upon us all.*

* Dr. Richards died about a week previous to the anniversary.

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SERMON CCCLXVIII.*

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THE LONG SUFFERING OF GOD.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—2 Pet., iii. 9.

The uniformity of the laws of Nature and of Providence has always been a fruitful occasion of scepticism and scoffing to irreligious men. This was true in that early age of the world, when Solomon, under the guidance of inspiration, recorded the fact, that "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." It was true in the days of our Saviour, and was strikingly symbolized in his parable of that evil servant, who said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," and so began to smite his fellow-servants and to eat and to drink with the drunken. It is true in these last days, of which Peter prophesied in the context, that there should come scoffers, "walking after their own lusts and saying: where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The sinner is not destroyed by an angel from heaven in the very act of transgression. The Atheist mocks God and spits against the heavens, but no avenging bolt strikes him to the ground. The enemy of the cross of Christ repeats in their spirit the taunts of his murderers, "he saved others, himself he cannot save; if thou be the Christ, save thyself and come down from the cross:" but no withering frown lowers on the brow—no scathing look of indignation flashes from the eye of the meek and benevolent sufferer. The heathen world is full of idolatry, and the Christian world of unbelief, and the hearts of the sons of men, almost universally, are fully set in them to do evil. But there are no signs that the world is coming to an end—no appearance of the Son of Man, as an Avenger and a Judge, in the clouds of heaven—no unusual lightnings, and thunderings, and heaving earthquakes, and falling stars—all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. True, as the Apostle suggests in the

* Preached in the Amherst College Chapel on the last Thursday of February, 1842—the day set apart by the churches to be observed annually as a day of fasting and prayer for colleges and other seminaries of learning.

context, there are destructive elements, out of which the earth was originally constructed, of which it is still in no small part composed, and which need only be let loose, and it would be dissolved in a moment. Nay more, the records of Science and of Revelation agree in teaching, that one of these elements has already swept every part of the earth's surface with the besom of destruction, and left it bare of everything that has the breath of life. And another element, still more terrible in its energies and desolating in its effects, is now reserved in the bowels of the earth—that vast and portentous magazine of ever-living fires, which need but a word from the voice of the Almighty to burst the thin shell in which they are encrusted, and convert the world into one bottomless, shoreless ocean of surging flames. But wicked men walk over the pit of destruction in willing ignorance, or in desperate recklessness of the fiery billows that roll below, because they do not feel the earth giving way under their feet, nor see the heavens gathering blackness over their heads, nor find the elements melting with fervent heat around them; but they behold sun, moon and stars rolling on in their appointed circuits, and seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, day and night succeeding each other, as they have from the foundation of the world.

How mysterious the circumstances under which man passes his probation! How much there is in them to remind him of his guilt and to warn him of his danger! Yet how much there is, of which he may take occasion, if he will, to lull his conscience to sleep, and harden still more a hard and impenitent heart! How strange that he should be allowed a probation at all after sinning so often, or sinning so much at once, under such circumstances! Why does heaven's vengeance sleep over the head of the transgressor? Why has not the deluge of fire long since gone forth and consumed a guilty world? Does the moral Governor of the universe connive at the violation of his law? Does he too, like the rulers of the earth, promise and not perform, or threaten and not execute?

To these questions we have an answer in the words of my text. The Lord is not slack in the fulfilment of his promise, however much men may charge him with slackness. This delay is the result of his forbearance and his goodness, and is designed to lead men to repentance. For he is not willing that any of his creatures should perish in sin. He desires the repentance and salvation of every individual of the human race. To this reason for God's delay to execute the sentence of his violated law—particularly to this last proposition, your attention is now invited.

God desires the repentance and salvation of every individual of the human family.—1. This great truth appears in the first place from the express declarations of his word. It is affirmed in the text as explicitly and as strongly as language can express it. He is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. It is taught in the writings of Paul as clearly as in those of Peter. God our Saviour will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge

of the truth. The Prophets assert it with no less earnestness than the Apostles. The language of God has been the same in all ages and under all dispensations. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Nor does he affirm it merely as a general and abstract proposition. He urges it upon the heart and conscience of particular transgressors, saying: turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? And when his affectionate warnings and expostulations are unheeded, how tenderly he mourns over their perverseness: oh, that they *had* hearkened to my voice! How shall I give thee up, how shall I deliver thee over to destruction! My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger. I will not return to destroy; for I am God and not man.

2. This truth results necessarily from the *character* of God. The idea is suggested by the passage just quoted: I will not return to destroy, for I am *God* and not man. A willingness to destroy is foreign to the *nature* and *character* of God. For God is love; and is love willing to inflict evil on the object of its affections? The very name of God imports that he is good—*the* good Being above all others—supremely good; and can supreme goodness be willing that any individual of our race should be eternally sinful and miserable? Punishment is his strange work. His delight is in the exercise of mercy. If he is brought in any instance to punish the guilty, it is only because his mercy extends to all his creatures and endures for ever; and mercy to a universe of immortal beings requires the sacrifice of the incorrigible transgressor.

Never shall we adequately conceive of the strength and intensity of God's desire for the salvation of men; for never shall we comprehend the length and breadth and height and depth of his infinite attributes. Does a father desire the virtue and happiness of his darling child beyond even the love he bears to himself? God is the real Father of all mankind. We are parents only in a secondary and subordinate sense. We are only the instruments of our children's existence—he is the Author of their being. We are finite in our conceptions of what is desirable, and in our affections for those we love. He is infinite in both. If we then, being evil, know how to give good things unto our children, how much more must he be willing to confer the gift of eternal life on all who are willing to receive it! How infinitely must our Father desire the holiness and happiness of all his children! Have you ever mourned over perverted faculties and blighted joys in some gifted sinner, and shuddered to think of him as sinning and suffering for ever in hell? But what do *you* know of the guilt of sin, or the pains of hell, or the capacities of man in comparison with the Omniscient mind! What abhorrence of sin and misery have you ever felt in comparison with him who is infinitely holy and infinitely benevolent! Is there joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth? And does not God himself rejoice infinitely more? To doubt that God desires the salvation of every sinner is not only to dis-

credit his word and make him a liar, but to impugn his character and suppose him less benevolent than his creatures—less good than ourselves. If there be any proposition in theology, which admits of demonstration, it is this, that a Being of infinite goodness must look upon the eternal sin and misery of a single creature as an infinite evil.

3. The same truth is clearly manifested in the mingled goodness and severity of God's providential dispensations. This truth, and this only, can explain his forbearance and delay to execute judgment upon the ungodly. So argues our text and context. We have already adverted to the argument. But we wish to bring it up again for further consideration in connection with those divine attributes, to which we made little or no reference under our last head.

We must contemplate the *justice* and *holiness* of God, if we would see how benevolent he is in his dealings with our race. It is only in view of his hatred to sin, that we can appreciate his love to the sinner. When we consider how strong is his regard to his law, how intense his displeasure at transgression, and how much we are constantly doing to provoke his righteous indignation—in a word, when we consider how powerful are those holy principles of his nature, which impel him to our destruction, then we feel that our preservation for a day or an hour in unrepented sin is explicable only on the supposition that he has an ardent desire for our repentance and salvation.

Look then at the holiness of God—so spotless in its nature that the heavens are unclean in comparison—so high in its demands that he charges his angels with impurity and folly—so opposed to sin that he turns with loathing and abhorrence from the slightest stain of pollution. See him shrinking and shuddering, as it were, at the sight of transgression; and hear him exclaim: Oh, do not that evil, that bitter, that abominable thing, that my soul hateth.

Look at his justice, set for the defence of his law, armed for the punishment of the transgressor, whetting its glittering sword and eager to pierce the hearts of the King's enemies. See him seated on the throne of the universe, the natural guardian at once of his own rights as the moral governor, and of the interests of all his creatures as the subjects of that government, which rights and interests may all be endangered by the spreading spirit of insubordination and rebellion if it is not checked by the prompt infliction of condign punishment. Consider how he has *expressed* his holy displeasure at sin, and *exhibited* his justice in the punishment of the transgressors. See him hurling the angels, that kept not their first estate, from their celestial seats at the very first outbreak of rebellion, and confining them in everlasting chains under darkness! See him dooming our first parents and all their posterity to sickness, and sin, and pain, and death, as the penalty of a single act of disobedience! See him washing out all the sins of the old world with a flood that covered the highest mountains and cleansed the darkest corners of pollution on the face of the whole earth! See him burning out the deepest stains of uncleanness from Sodom and Gomorrah, raining fire and brimstone from heaven upon the devoted cities, and

burying their very sites in the bottom of the sea! Remember that he still holds in reserve the same destructive elements in vast quantities and of resistless power, near at hand, separated from us only by a boundary that may easily be passed—only by a crust of earth that may in a moment be broken, chafing, raging to find vent, and waiting only the word of the Almighty to burst forth for the perdition of ungodly men. And the world is *full* of such men. All men are by nature such, and such only. They forget God. They disregard his authority. They trample under foot his law. They insult his justice and abuse his goodness. They are in open rebellion against his moral government. And yet the earth does not quake and open to receive them. The sea does not overpass its bounds to swallow them up. The magazines of almighty wrath are not opened. The arm of the Destroyer is stayed. And why? Mercy! mercy to the ill-deserving! love to their souls, a desire for their repentance and salvation strong enough to overpower the strict demands of justice and holiness—this is the only satisfactory answer—this is the only adequate explanation of the amazing forbearance and long-suffering of that God who is angry with the wicked every day.

And it is for the same reason that the individual sinner is permitted to live in that world which he so mars and defiles by his sins. It is for this reason that you live, my hearer, if you are still an impenitent transgressor of God's holy law. God desires your *repentance* and *salvation*. You have the proof of it in every breath you draw, in every comfort you experience, in every pleasure you enjoy. God commands you to love him with all your heart, and serve him with all your powers, and seek his glory in all your actions. But you live regardless of his commands, forgetful of his existence—just as if there were no such being as God in the universe. Under these circumstances every act of your life is an act of disobedience, every step you take is rushing upon the thick bosses of his buckler. And why does he not strike you dead? Why is the uplifted sword of justice stayed in its course? Why does he bestow good, where evil is due, and protect instead of destroying you, and hold you up instead of letting you fall, and give you food to eat, and raiment to put on, and light to see, and air to breathe, and all good things richly to enjoy? There can be no room for doubt in such a case. It is because mercy cries: spare him this year, this week, this day, at least, and see if he will not repent. It is because the goodness of God would fain lead you to repentance.

Do you say: he brings evil upon me as well as good. I see so much sickness, and sorrow, and pain, and distress around me, and feel so much within me, that I cannot think he delights in my happiness. Nay, that is only another proof of his goodness. It is a part of his wondrous plan to save your soul. If he had made you perfectly happy in your sins, you would never have felt any desire to forsake them. If you would have been happy on earth, you would never have that of heaven. If you had seen no inflictions of his justice here, you would have feared none hereafter. On the other hand, if he had dealt with

you in strict justice and made you as perfectly miserable as you are wholly sinful, you would have seen no proof of his benevolence, and had no encouragement to hope for forgiveness even on condition of repentance. Behold, then, the goodness, the severity of God! How happily mingled! How wisely attempered so as to alarm our fears and not reduce us to despair; to convince us of sin and lead us to hope for pardon, to drive us from this world and draw us toward heaven. How dear, and convincing, and affecting the proof in all the ills of life, as well as all its good, that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!

4. The same truth is still more strikingly exhibited in the provisions of the Gospel and the whole economy of grace.

There can be no better test of the desire which any being has for any object than the efforts and sacrifices which he is willing to make for its attainment. We estimate the love which our friends bear to us, and the regard which they have for our welfare, not so much by the intrinsic value of what they confer upon us or do for us, as by the pains, and labor, and expense it has cost them to procure it.

Were our salvation of little consequence to us, were it even easily procurable by ourselves, still the author of it would show a desire for it and a love for our souls precisely proportioned to the inward struggles he has felt and the outward obstacles he has removed, to the expense he has incurred and the sacrifices he has made for its accomplishment. But our salvation is of infinite moment to us. The measure of it is deep as hell, high as heaven, vast as eternity. Nothing on earth is comparatively of any value. The things of time are valuable only as they relate and conduce to this great end of our existence. And it cannot be procured by ourselves. We were ruined beyond the possibility of self-recovery. That rash act was *done*, which brought death into the world and all our wo; and it could not be *un*done. We too had put forth our hand and plucked and ate forbidden fruit; and the world without as well as the soul within gave signs of wo that all was lost. We had *sinned* and could make no atonement. We had stained our hands with guilt, and no water of Jordan, no blood of bulls or goats could wash it out. Though we had never sinned again, and had spent the remainder of our days in mourning our folly, like him who has imbued his hands in a brother's blood and the next instant would do anything to recall his departed spirit, we could not undo the foul deed. In spite of all our tears of penitence and promises of amendment the law must take its course and our souls must suffer the penalty of eternal death. But it was *not* a single sin, neither were we penitent for its commission. We justified it and repeated it times without number. We were still rolling sin as a sweet morsel under our tongues, and spending our lives in transgression, when the very Being, whose law we had violated, and whose goodness we had abused, interposed for our redemption. And it was not an easy work to be accomplished. There was a conflict and a struggle, if I may so speak, in the bosom of the Most High. Justice and holiness demanded the sinner's punishment.

Love and mercy pleaded for his salvation. And how could they be reconciled? Men could not imagine. Angels could not conceive. The energies of the infinite mind were put in requisition, and divine wisdom discovered a plan wherein justice and mercy met together, and righteousness and peace embraced each other. There were outward obstacles to be removed. Sin had struck at the foundations of the eternal throne, and how could the breach be repaired but by the punishment of the sinner? Man had set the example of insubordination and rebellion; and what but his death as the penalty could prevent the spirit of disaffection from spreading through the universe? Here again no creature dared to guess that any scheme could be devised, which would save the rebel without fostering rebellion. But the all-wise Creator found a ransom, which was not more merciful to man, than it was honorable to himself and advantageous to the moral universe.

Then followed the execution of the wonderful blow, involving such mighty efforts, and such stupendous sacrifices, for human salvation. Let it be told in the language of Scripture, for no other language can tell it so well. And it requires all the *authority* of Justification to make the doctrine *credible*. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Therein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And God the Son was as ready for the sacrifice, as God the Father. Let this, too, be told in the language of Scripture, that there may be no room for unbelief, however marvellous the declaration. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; full of grace and truth. Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. And yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. Though he knew no sin, yet was he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him. Now, was there no self-denial and sacrifice in all this? Was it no sacrifice for the Father to part with his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, the effulgence of his own glory, the perfect image of himself, who had ever been the companion of his bosom, and the sharer of his throne, whom all Heaven adored, and in whom his own heart of infinite love delighted. Was it no sacrifice for such a Father to give up such a Son, and send him into a distant, dark, cold, and rebellious province, and imprison him in a body of flesh, and invest him with human infirmities and sorrows, and subject him to the power of malignant enemies, and

leave him to be spit upon, buffeted, scourged, and crucified; and, what is more than all, himself to bruise him, and put him to grief, and place him in the stead, and visit upon him the sins, of a whole world! And was it no sacrifice for such a Son to leave the bosom of such a Father, and lay aside the glory which he had with him before the foundation of the world, and robe himself in the likeness of shameful, sinful flesh, and live among rebels against his Father's throne, and blasphemers of his Father's character and home, and die beneath the curse of that law which he fully obeyed, but which they trampled under foot? That the King of kings should become a servant of servants, that the heir of all things should not have so much as a place whereon to lay his head, that the blessed God should become a man of sorrows, and he who was worshipped in Heaven be crucified on earth, and the Lord of life and glory die the ignominious death of the cross. Is there no sacrifice in all this? Oh, there were never any *other* sacrifices that deserved the name in comparison. I would not call these sacrifices, if I could find any other stronger, better word, which were at all adequate to express the idea. But *no* language can reach up to the throne of the Eternal Word, or down to the cross of the atoning Saviour, still less can it span the infinite distance between them. And yet this distance is only the measure of God's desire for the salvation of sinful man. This stupendous scheme, which *human* language cannot compass, *is* the language which *God* himself uses to express his love for our souls.

And this is but the first in a long series of divine acts, all aiming to secure the same great end, and all conspiring to express, with an emphasis and a pathos far beyond the power of words, the strong desire which God has for our redemption from the power and penalty of sin. He has given us his written Word, which is full of pressing commands, winning invitations, tender entreaties, fervent expostulations, cogent arguments, pathetic appeals, and powerful motives, all bearing on the accomplishment of a single purpose—the repentance and salvation of sinners. He has commissioned his ministers to seek out lost men, and follow them up with the preaching of the Gospel, and press home the truth through the eye, and the ear, and every other avenue of persuasion; to tell them, from experience, the misery of sin, and the happiness of religion, and the way of life; and, as ambassadors of Christ, in Christ's stead, to pray them to become reconciled to God. He ever accompanies his written and spoken word with the divine energies of his Providence and his Holy Spirit, now by his goodness winning them to repentance, now by afflictions softening their hearts, now suggesting a passage of Scripture, now applying with power the preached Gospel, and now, by a more direct and efficacious influence, touching the deep springs of thought, motive, and action, and creating them anew unto good works.

Now, does God command, and intreat, and move men to acts which he does not wish them to perform? Is all this costly and powerful array of means and motives directed towards an object which he does not desire to accomplish? Is the all-perfect God capable of insincere-

ty? And if he were a man, that he should lie, would he be at so much pains and expense to effect a purpose which he intends to thwart? If the doctrine of my text is not taught in the Gospel of Christ, and the economy of grace, there are no *means* of teaching it. If God has not clearly manifested the strongest desire for the salvation of mankind, there is no way in which he could make it manifest. No tongue of men or angels could express it. No sign on earth or in heaven could signify it; for words and actions have already exhausted their significance in the effort. Words and actions more than human, too—words such as only the Holy Ghost teacheth, and actions such as only the Son of God could perform.

And let it not be forgotten, that this desire embraces *every individual* of the human family. The proof is just as unequivocal that he desires the salvation of all, as that he desires that of any part; that he would have every individual repent and be saved, as that he would have the great mass. The *atonement* is made for all. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world: he tasted death for every man. The *command* is addressed to all. God's word commandeth all men everywhere to repent. The *invitations* of the Gospel are extended to all. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth, say come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Yes, salvation *is free*. It *is* the *water* of life, cheap, abundant, open to all. It is the *light* of life—it shines for all. It is the *breath* of life—it circulates for all. The provisions of the Gospel, and the economy of grace, agree with the character of God, the declarations of his word, and the dealings of his providence, in establishing, beyond a doubt, the doctrine of the text, that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.

Is it indeed a well-established truth that God desires the salvation of every individual of our race? Then we are bound to believe it, and act upon it—to give it a prominent place in our creed, and a commanding influence over our conduct. If it is true, it is a truth of amazing interest and importance. And that it *is* true, is established by a force, and variety, and accumulation of evidence, which cannot be found, perhaps, for any other doctrine of our holy religion. It lies on the face, as taken at the foundation, of all the leading facts, as well as all the great doctrines of Christianity. If we were at liberty to discredit the less important or less substantiated of those doctrines, which we know not how to reconcile, this, I apprehend, would be the last to disappear from our creed. And yet for this very reason—its supposed incompatibility, or its want of manifest compatibility with other doctrines of revelation—we are very prone to sink it into virtual, if not real, discredit—to divest it of its practical force, if not even to question its literal truth. Now we shall not attempt to deny that there are many plausible objections against the doctrine. It is very easy to ask such questions as these: If God really desires the salvation of all, why are so many lost? Cannot Almighty Power accomplish what Infinite

Benevolence desires? Moreover, do not those who perish, perish in accordance with an eternal and immutable purpose of God? And how is such a purpose consistent with a desire for their salvation? We say, we do not attempt to deny, that these questions involve real difficulties. Still less shall we undertake here to furnish a solution. But we do wish to utter a word of caution and admonition to two or three classes of our hearers. There is a numerous class before me, whose present or prospective profession leads them to a systematic study, and a dogmatic view of the doctrines of religion. The class is not confined, however, to theologians and theological students. It embraces the most *intelligent* and *thoughtful* Christians of *every* profession. Now we do not counsel such persons to renounce the study of systematic theology, or despair of clearing away more or less of its difficulties, or give over the effort to improve its forms and explanations. We cannot doubt that, as man enlarges his powers, and extends his knowledge, and cultivates discrimination in thought and language, and makes progress in the arts and sciences, and, above all, as he learns to study and know *himself*, his views of religious truth will become far more clear, consistent, and correct. It cannot be otherwise. For every truth is related to every other truth. Especially is every other science related to the grand, central science of theology. And as Edwards could not possibly entertain the same views of the Bible and its sublime revelations, as the uncultivated, the converted savage, so the Christian philosopher of an age that far *exceeds* the age of Edwards in every branch of knowledge, cannot, in the nature of things, hold to all his speculative opinions. It is the high prerogative of the word, as well as the works of God, to expand with the mind that studies it, to brighten with the eye that gazes on it, and to rise with the spirit that drinks in its inspiration. We would say then: Study theology—study it systematically—study it profoundly—study it for yourself. Examine its difficulties, and labor to reconcile its apparent inconsistencies. For we are not among the number of those who hold that the *whole* promises of the Philosopher, whether physical or metaphysical, is to discover *facts*, and investigate the evidence by which they are substantiated. We believe that it is his vocation also to reconcile *conflicting* facts and opinions. We see not how a Christian minister, or a Christian *man* of active mind, can *refrain* from exerting his utmost energies to discover the harmony of tl ose great doctrines of our faith, which appear in any degree incompatible. But let him beware how he rejects one because he cannot reconcile it with another. Let him take care how he fixes his eye on one, till the other fades from his view, or loses any of its power on his heart. Let him hold *each* as fully and as strongly, as if he knew nothing of the other. Let him rely as unhesitatingly, and act as vigorously, with as little tendency to practical antinomianism or fatalism, upon the great truth that God desires the salvation of all mankind, as if there were no such doctrine as the doctrine of decrees. And, on the other hand, let him stand at an equal remove from Armenianism or universalism; let him believe that God has a purpose, and that he will

accomplish it in those who are lost, as truly and fully as if he had no desire that they should be saved. Such is the dictate of sound science and of common sense. So we act in the physical sciences and in secular concerns. Thus, it is a chemical law that bodies *contract* with cold; at the same time, it is a chemical fact that water *expands* when it freezes. The latter seems to be inconsistent with the former. Yet no man, however absorbed in scientific speculations, ever questioned either the former or the latter. They were both established by indubitable evidence; and scientific men, like other men, believed them both, and acted upon each in its *proper place*, without the slightest reference to the *other*. They labored to reconcile the apparent inconsistency. They were never satisfied till they succeeded. They found a harmonizing principle in the law of crystallization, which, in the freezing of water, comes in not to destroy the general law, but to modify the particular result. But they would have given a theoretical and a practical belief to both doctrines, though they had never discovered the principle in which they harmonize. In like manner the theological doctrines under consideration, both rest upon incontrovertible evidence, though we find it difficult to see their full compatibility. We may speculate upon the difficulty. We may strive to solve it. Perhaps we shall succeed; perhaps we shall not. But, at all events, we must hold on to the doctrines, and give each its proper place in our creed—its *whole* appropriate influence over our conduct. Especially should we not allow the doctrines of divine decrees to impair, by one jot or tittle, our practical belief in the doctrine of God's universal benevolence. For the purposes of God, as to who shall be saved, are a profound secret. His desire, that none should be lost, is clearly revealed. The purposes are to be acquiesced in, when they become known. The desire is to be acted upon as a constant rule of duty. The doctrine of decrees assures us, that God will not be thwarted or disappointed in his plans, let who will choose to perish. The doctrine of the text teaches us that he will be pleased when, and only when we exert our utmost endeavors to secure the salvation of every human being. This, then, is the grand doctrine by which we are to govern our conduct as Christians. To it we must sacrifice every conflicting dogma of mere reason. And *it* we must *not* sacrifice or impair, in the slightest degree, in the attempt to harmonize it with any other, however incontrovertible the doctrines of revelation. We must take it into our hearts, and act it out in our lives, not as it lies chiselled and polished, cold and dead, in our theological systems, but as it lives and breathes in the divine word, in the life of our Saviour, and in the bosom of God himself. I have dwelt on this topic long, too long, perhaps, because the error I have been exposing is fatal to active piety, and yet, I fear, it is one into which a numerous class of my hearers is liable to fall. I shall touch briefly on the remaining topics.

Another class is composed of persons who feel a *serious, practical* difficulty on this subject. They have looked at the sin and misery of themselves, and their perishing fellow men, in connection with that di-

vine purpose, which includes whatsoever comes to pass, till they cannot preclude from their minds a serious doubt, whether God does sincerely desire the salvation of all. Wise they cannot have been in coming into so unhappy a state of mind; but honest they may be in it. Gladly would they suppress the rising doubt. They succeed, perhaps, in banishing it for a season; but back it comes again, with redoubled force, at the first favorable opportunity. Now, to such persons we say: Your only safety lies in diverting your attention from the *objections* against the doctrine of the text, and fastening it upon the *evidences* by which that doctrine is established. In *your state* of *mind* it is *not* safe nor right to give yourself up to the examination of speculative difficulties. Objections will only magnify as you dwell upon them, and you will never break through them by the direct force of your understanding or your will. But you can turn your attention another way. Look at the unequivocal declarations of him who cannot lie. Consider the established character of him whose name is good, and whose nature is love. Review the dealings of his Providence with you; see if his kindness has not been unwearied, and if his chastisements have not been wisely adapted to promote your spiritual good. Above all, contemplate the gift of his Son to die in your stead, the gift of his word and his Spirit to renew and sanctify your heart, the commands, invitations, and intreaties, which he constantly addresses to you by the mouth of his ministers, and all those amazing expressions of love and mercy, which are made in the provisions of the Gospel and the economy of grace. If you can dwell upon these fruitful, moving arguments, and still question God's desire for your salvation, I fear that not evidence is wanting, but an honest disposition to discover and embrace the truth.

A third class consists of those who are *fond* of raising objections and uttering cavils against the doctrines of Scripture touching the divine will. Does not God have mercy on whom he will have mercy? and whom he will, he hardeneth? Why, then, does he yet find fault; for who have resisted his will? *You*, my hearer, *you* have resisted his will—most clearly and unequivocally declared. He commands you to repent, and yet you continue impenitent. He desires your salvation; but you seem bent on being lost. In the language of mingled authority and tenderness he cries after you, Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? But you turn not. He has hedged up your way with blessings and afflictions, with faithful ministers and affectionate friends, with the cross of his Son and the strivings of his Spirit; but you break through every barrier, and rush madly towards perdition. And, if in spite of all this you do perish, he *will* find fault with you for ever for resisting his will; and your own reason and conscience will find fault with you and condemn you, as the author of your own destruction.

Does God desire the salvation of all mankind? Then what inducement and encouragement we have to seek our own salvation! How reasonable that we should be concerned for ourselves, when the greatest and the best of beings is so deeply interested and concerned in our

behalf! How can we falter in effort or despair of success, when Almighty Power and Infinite Love are exerted to save us! What more animating and cheering consideration could be presented to the mind of a guilty, ruined sinner, than this: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. Do you shrink from the self-denial you must practise, and faint under the cross you must bear? Think of Christ denying himself, for your sake, and not only bearing his cross, but dying on it for your salvation. And not merely for your own sake, but that he may see the travail of his soul and be satisfied—seek that salvation till you find it, whatever it may cost you.

Does God desire the salvation of every individual of the human family? Then if we are his children, we shall desire the same thing, and patiently labor, cheerfully suffer, for its accomplishment. If we are the children of God, we shall be like him; and if we are like him, we shall feel strong desires and make great sacrifices for the salvation of men. If we are Christians, we shall be like Christ; and if we are like Christ, we shall shrink from no self-denial or toil, sacrifices or sufferings, for the salvation of man. We talk much of the self-denial and sacrifices of those who devote their property, their children, or themselves, to the cause of Christian benevolence. And some among us do, perhaps, deny themselves the luxuries of life, and make no inconsiderable sacrifice of property, to give what they do, in these trying times, for the cause of Christ; but have they sacrificed infinite riches and become poor, that others, through their poverty, might be made spiritually and eternally rich? It *is* hard to part with our sons, and send them far away to toil and suffer and die among the heathen. But did any of us ever part with *such* a Son, and send him so far away to such scenes of sorrow and suffering, as did the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he sent him on his mission to our world? It *is* self-denial to leave the comforts of civilized life, and the embraces of friends, and the privileges of a Christian land, and all the hallowed associations of home and country, and live and die amid degraded, polluted, savage heathen. But what is that in comparison with leaving the light, and felicity, and glory of heaven, to live, and labor, and suffer, and die on earth? Oh no, my brethren, it ill becomes us to talk of sufferings and sacrifices for Christ's sake. It rather becomes us to blush for shame that we have so little sympathy with God, in his earnest desires for the salvation of man; that we can withhold our substance, or rest in our labors, while there is a human being perishing in sin, and anything yet remains that can be done for his salvation.

Does God desire the salvation of all men? Then we have great encouragement to prayer and effort for the revival of religion and the conversion of sinners. When we labor for the conversion of any sinner in any part of the world, we are engaged in a work in which we are sure of the divine sympathy and co-operation, and how encouraging, how delightful, to labor with God for a co-worker! When we pray for the outpouring of the Spirit and the revival of religion in any

church, however feeble and obscure, we cannot doubt that we ask for that which is agreeable to the will of God; and if we ask aright for that which is agreeable to his will, we know that he will hear us and grant us our requests. Especially may we feel this assurance, when we pray, as we do, on this sacred anniversary occasion, for the conversion of the young men in our institutions of learning—the future teachers and rulers of our nation, the professional men and men of influence of the coming generation—the rising hope of our country, the church, and the world. Here we pray for our country in its magistrates, for the church in its ministers, for the world in its missionaries, for every good cause in its future agents and representatives, for all the streams of influence in their fountain and source. We pray not only for a great object, but at a critical time. The cry of a surplus of ministers, which has of late rung through the land, together with the increasing difficulties of the ministry, is fast producing its legitimate effects. It has already occasioned a great falling off in the number of those who are in the various stages of preparation for the sacred office. There will soon be heard a *louder* cry of an alarming *deficiency* of men for the pastoral charge, and for the missionary work. And the deficiency can be *seasonably* supplied—the disastrous results can be forestalled and prevented in no conceivable way, but by the speedy conversion of a great number of those young men in our Colleges, who are already far advanced in their intellectual preparation. Considering then the urgency of the crisis, and remembering that we pray to a God who loves prayer, who has often heard the prayers of his people while they were yet speaking—for an object dearer to him than the apple of his eye or the Son of his love, let us approach him with holy boldness, and with humble confidence ask him, for the sake of his dear Son, to bestow the baptism of his gracious Spirit on all these youth, that the next may indeed be a chosen generation—that ours may then be a holy nation; that a truly Christian priesthood may minister in all our churches, and apostolic missionaries bear the glad tidings of salvation to the ends of the world.

SERMON CCCLXIX.

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FAULTS IN PRAYER.

"Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss."—James iv. 3.

Few subjects claim a higher importance than that of prayer. As the divinely appointed way in which the blessings of God are obtained, it stands connected, in the mind of the Christian, directly with his own elevation in piety, and with the highest good of others—with the glory of God, and the eternal well-being of men. Into no act, therefore, of his mind will he be more disposed to extend a far-reaching and jealous scrutiny than into the feelings and motives which influence him in this duty, and especially in seasons of spiritual declension, when the windows of heaven are closed, when the ways of Zion mourn and few come to her solemn feasts; for it may be taken as certain that at such times there is a fault somewhere—that there is something wrong—some "iniquity in our holy things." It is equally certain that this, whatever it may be, will not be seen and corrected unless the Christian is in earnest in his search for it—unless he is willing to look into the deep recesses of his own heart, and to search it as "with lighted candles"—to try his thoughts and to examine thoroughly his feelings in prayer, his motives in lifting up his supplication to God, and the consequent action of the life.

The present aspect of things calls imperiously for such examination. Christians pray, and yet they are not revived. They lift up their voices in supplication to God in behalf of those who are ready to perish, and yet they are not converted. There is not heard throughout our churches the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This fact ought to make us feel that there is something wrong in our intercession, or in something connected with it. It ought to lead us to suspect that the reason we receive not, is that we ask amiss—ask with wrong views or feelings. For we cannot for one moment suppose that God is unwilling to hear and answer prayer. We know that he is not. We are not straitened in him. "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." His ear is open to our cry. He bids us ask, and on the ground of his promise that, if we ask, we shall receive. He urges us to do this by declaring that he is more willing to give us the Holy Spirit, than we are to give good gifts to our chil-

dren. No; we are not straitened in God. The difficulty is in us—in the manner in which we ask—in the feelings with which we seek—in the motives with which we knock—or in something connected with it or consequent upon it. Let us search at least, brethren, and see if this be not the fact. Let us not rest until the scrutiny is made, and conscience is clear and decided in its testimony. The examination extends over a wide field; I can, therefore, only direct your attention to a few points, and leave you to make the application, or extend the scrutiny further.

1. *We may pray without any deep and affecting sense of our own wants, or of the wants of others.* There may be so little thought bestowed upon our condition—upon our helplessness—our proneness to evil—and our distance from God, as will leave no adequate impression on the mind of the facts in the case. We may think so little upon the provisions of the Gospel—upon the fulness of God in Christ for us—and upon him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, as to be ignorant of what we have in Christ, or at least to have no proper idea of its richness and abundance. The thoughts may be fastened so seldom upon the condition of the impenitent—upon their danger while out of Christ and upon the worth of the soul and the glory of God in its salvation, as will fix no conviction in the mind corresponding with the peril of the sinner and the loss of the soul. Here, we fear, there is a fault among Christians generally. Other subjects so occupy the mind as to leave little time for meditation on these things. Other cares are allowed so far to exhaust the strength, that nothing scarcely is left for the contemplation of the great interests of the soul. Men come to this work with only a fragment of their energies, and engage in it with a mind torn and distracted by the things which perish with the using. Hence they have no deep and affecting sense of their condition or of that of others, and consequently they do not pray as they should. They ask amiss. Their pleading does not correspond with the facts in the case. In the absence of a proper impression on the mind of their wants and those of others, there is no proper feeling —no becoming emotion, and of course no suitable importunity—no holy pleading with God in prayer. Neglecting to muse upon what we are—what we need—and what others need—the fire of heavenly feeling does not burn in the soul—no heaviness of heart is felt—and no fervent, effectual prayer ascends. We can never plead our wants till we feel them. We can never mourn over sin before God, till we are prostrated to the earth by a sense of its evil. We can never intercede for the impenitent as we ought, till we see and feel the worth of the immortal soul. While the Christians of Laodicea felt that they were rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing, it was impossible for them to pray as they should—to pray in accordance with the facts in their case—to pray as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. They had no proper sense of their wants. They asked, and received not, therefore, because they asked amiss.

2. *Our language in prayer may be in advance of the real desires of*

the heart. We may express more than we really feel. Words may be used without much definite meaning—may be employed without being the true exponents of the feelings of the heart. We may ask in an earnestness of manner which is in advance of our real desires. A shrewd statesman once defined the faculty of speech to be the power in man of *concealing his real opinions and designs.* This facetious definition may lead us to think of a fearful source of temptation in prayer. The Christian is not tempted at first to omit this duty. That is too bold a proposition for the adversary to make to him. It is presenting iniquity in wholesale. No, his snares are hidden. His temptations lie in the manner of this exercise—in the motives which prompt us to it—and in the feelings with which we engage in it. His aim is to *separate the tongue from the heart*—to produce sounds with the one which are not the true echoes of the feelings in the other—a kind of mechanical action in the organs of speech, "which runs over a form of words without any aid of the understanding—without any concurrence of the will, and without any consent or prompting of the affections." We are in great danger of concealing the real state of the heart, not from men—not from God—but from ourselves, by the language of our prayers. We may not, indeed, intend to practise any such imposition upon ourselves; we may not even be conscious of it at the time, and yet it may be true. We may even in the closet, and more particularly in the social circle, say more than we feel—we may give utterance to language that is, in its import, in advance of the real askings and cravings of the inner man, and thus offend against God.

If there is a proper sense of our wants and of the condition of impenitent men in the mind, the heart will be in advance of the tongue. We shall feel, what we cannot fully express. We shall be conscious of intercessory feeling and desire, to which no language can give adequate utterance. Such was the fact, when Moses, interceding for guilty Israel, said, "If thou wilt not forgive their sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." Such was the fact, when Paul prayed for his countrymen, and said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Here there was a heaviness in the heart, which no language could express. That which was used, and which startles us even by its boldness, was but the distant echo of what these devoted men felt. Luther's heart was evidently in advance also of his impassioned language. He desired what he could but feebly express. So great was the earnestness with which John Knox prayed for his country, that his cry was, "*Give me Scotland* or I DIE!" His mind had seized upon this object with such intensity of desire, as could not be denied, with such a grasp of feeling as was stronger than death. No one can fail to see a connection between this state of his heart and the results which followed—to see a reason in this deep-working intercession in his bosom, why his prayer was answered—why his enemies quailed before the voice of his supplication. His prayers were the earnest—the compassionate desires of his heart—the groanings which could

not be uttered. But when the reverse of all this is true, when the language means more than the heart really feels, it is not prayer—it is only a solemn sound from a thoughtless tongue.

3. *Feeling may be disproportionate in reference to the objects for which we pray.* We may ask for certain things with too great earnestness and importunity. There are objects of prayer in reference to which we should take no denial; objects, which God has promised to bestow, and in regard to which we can never feel too deeply or plead too importunately. In matters of spiritual interest—in things that concern our growth in grace—our communion with God—our sympathy with the mind of Christ in the work of saving the souls of men, no desire can be too deep—no pleading too great. But there are other objects where no such earnestness—no such importunity would be proper—where our desires should be very moderate. There are objects of earthly interest merely—things which concern our temporal convenience or happiness only, in reference to which we may ask amiss, by asking with too much earnestness. Feeling should be regulated by the intrinsic worth of those objects which claim our attention. Interest should be felt in different things, just as those things differ in importance—just as they bear more or less directly on the great object and end of human existence. David desired to awake in the likeness of God and to build him a temple. It would have been wrong in him if he had felt equally urgent in these desires. Paul would have sinned, had he felt the same heaviness of heart in reference to the thorn in his flesh, that he did in regard to the salvation of his countrymen. A desire to succeed in business cherished to the same extent as that for prosperity of soul would manifestly be sinful.

The temptation to disproportionate feeling, in reference to the objects for which we pray, is very great. We are creatures of sense. We love to walk by sight. What is seen affects us much more than what is unseen—the present more than the future. Things near us appear larger, and attract attention, and of course enlist more of feeling than those do which are at a greater distance, and of immensely more importance. The danger is that we shall feel too much in regard to temporal things, and too little in reference to what is eternal. This disproportion is wrong. Feeling should rise or fall with the inherent worth of those things which call it forth. It is not right that the interests of earth should have more of the heart than the momentous concerns of eternity. It is not right that we should fix with greater desire upon the convenience or life of the body than upon the weal of its thinking, undying inmate. It cannot be otherwise than displeasing to God to see a greater earnestness in the heart of the Christian in prayer about what perishes with the using, than is felt about that for which atoning blood has been shed. It must be reason enough for sending us empty away when we come before him in the earthly mould of such feelings —when he sees in us desires so disproportionate to the real worth of things—so contrary to his word and so little in sympathy with our expectations as Christians—desires which tend to chain us to the earth

—and which war with all the aspirations awakened in the soul by the Spirit of God.

4. *We may pray without any fixed determination to act in accordance with our prayer.* Two points here particularly claim attention. We may confess our sins in prayer without any fixed and definite purpose to forsake them. Confession may spring, in part at least, from custom. Praying is with the Christian a daily exercise. What is repeated from day to day becomes familiar, and often flows from our lips, especially in its indefinite aspect, almost as a matter of course. As we have seen, words may express more than the heart feels, and more than we are determined to do. Confession of sin may be made, and yet not be prompted by a feeling of self-degradation in consequence of it. It may come from the lips, when the heart is not loathing itself on account of it, and determined to forsake it. The action consequent upon the prayer may not be in accordance with the confession.

It is not thus that we act when we confess a fault to man. If you have injured any one, and confess it, and ask his forgiveness, you mean all that you say—your confession is accompanied with a determination to do so no more. The confession in this case comes from the heart—from a sense of shame felt in the soul, and is therefore followed by reformation. But what is there in an offence against man, that should crimson the countenance and lead to better action, when compared with the meanness and insult of sin against God? If confession to man makes it necessary to cease from the offence, how can we confess our sins to God, without a fixed and honest determination to forsake them? Words, here, are nothing, except as they come from the heart, and are followed by action which corresponds with them. The question is not what we know, or can say about sin, but this, what we feel it to be—what we are determined to do in reference to it. It is in vain to confess it, while our conduct shows that we differ in our feelings with God in regard to its evil. Sin is an abominable thing; it is what God abhors. It must be offensive to him, therefore, when we confess it without in heart loathing it, and without a determination to abandon it—to free ourselves, through his grace, from all its pollutions. To confess a particular sin, and yet continue in it, is mockery. To confess our coldness in religion, and yet make no effort to wake up into spiritual life, is an offence. To pray for our enemies, and yet not from the heart forgive them, is adding sin to sin. In one word, to confess sin without determining to forsake it, is to take your position on the barren heath,—is to sit where the frown of God rests, and where darkness, doubt, and despair, will be your companions and your constant tormentors.

Again, we may pray for divine direction, and yet not be fully and sincerely determined to follow it when given. Nothing is more proper in the Christian, who is of yesterday, and who knows comparatively nothing, than to ask wisdom from above. And yet, in this we are in great danger of offending God, by asking amiss. We may ask for wisdom, without any fixed purpose to follow where it leads, to believe

what it teaches, to do what it commands. This was the fact in ancient Israel, when Isaiah was commanded to cry aloud and spare not—to show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. They seek me daily, said the Lord to his Prophet, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. They ask for wisdom without intending to follow it—for the path of duty without any purpose to pursue it. Hence the Lord said, should I be inquired of by men, who have set up their idols in their hearth, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face? They ask wisdom of me, and yet are determined to do as they please. So we may act. We may ask to be freed from idols—to have them pointed out, and yet not be wholly willing to part with them when seen. We may look up and ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, and yet not be determined to enter any door of usefulness, which he, in his providence, may open for us. We may pray to be led into all the truth, and yet not be prepared to give up all our preconceived opinions, when shown to be wrong—to lay aside all our prejudices, and to take our place at the feet of Jesus, like little children.

5. *We may pray with wrong ends in view, as it respects the use we mean to make of the blessing asked.* We may ask amiss in this, that we intend to consume what we ask for upon our pleasures—upon sinister and selfish objects. We may pray, earnestly desiring what we seek, and yet have an end in view to be affected by it, which will be offensive to God. The farmer, for instance, may pray for the early and the latter rain, and for an abundant harvest—he may pray that his barns may be filled with plenty, and yet not with a greater good as the end to be accomplished by it. The mechanic may ask to be prospered in his business for his own comfort and convenience, and not for the sake of greater means with which to bless others. The merchant may pray for success in trade, for the sake of amassing wealth, and not for the sake of feeding the hungry, of clothing the naked, or of sending the word of life to the destitute. We may pray for the success of the Gospel, and yet have a selfish end in view. There are many ways in which the enlargement of Christ's kingdom would affect us beneficially, and free us from much toil and self-denial. We may seek for growth in grace, because we wish to be raised above the perplexity of doubts and fears, and not because we wish to shine in the beauties of holiness, and that God may thereby be glorified. A selfish end can never be pleasing to God. Prayer, with any such object in view, must remain unanswered.

This important point cannot be pressed too much. Many Christians, it is to be feared, do not even suspect anything of this kind in their supplications, and yet, perhaps, there is no exercise in which they are more exposed to, or less free from, the influence of self-seeking. The action of the mind, in its approaches to the throne of Grace, *may be*, at least, as really prompted by this spirit, as it is in anything else. The

Christian may be as much under the dominion of selfishness in his closet, as he is in his business. He may come as far short of exercising a proper benevolence at the family altar, as he does in his workshop or behind his counter, or in the arrangements of his domestic affairs. He may be moved just as little by the spirit of an enlarged and generous philanthropy in the supplications of the social circle, or of the sanctuary, as he is in the wider range of his other acts. He may pray chiefly for himself, for his family, for his church or denomination. He may invert the order of subjects in the form of prayer given by the Saviour to his disciples, and venture but little into those glowing petitions which respect the will and glory of God. His praying may not extend a whit beyond the littleness that characterizes his other acts. Why should it, if he speaks only as the heart feels? If the heart is filled with benevolence, it will show it in all things. If it fails here in other things, it will in prayer. Our compassions may therefore be as really wanting in prayer, as in anything else. We may feel as little the promptings of a high-born and benevolent sympathy with torn and shattered humanity here, as elsewhere. We may pray for our own comfort, convenience, and ease, and forget the glory of God, and the wants of a perishing world, as really as we do in our thoughts during the day. We may ask and receive not, because we intend to consume it upon our pleasures.

6. *We may pray for blessings upon ourselves and others, and yet not do it wholly in the name of Christ and for the glory of God.* When we fail here, it affects the whole action of the mind. We live under an economy of redemption; God in Christ is reconciling the world unto himself. It is, therefore, through Christ that every mercy, temporal or spiritual, comes to us. It is on his account that the thunder of God sleeps in the bosom of the darkened cloud, and falls not upon the head of the sinner. It is because of his death that the sun shines—that the moon gives her light—that the seasons revolve, and the earth yields her increase. Yes, it is through the intercession of his broken body and gushing blood that every blessing comes to us—that pardon is given—that the soul is created anew—is filled with peace and joy, and a way to the Father of our spirits is opened for us. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Hence we are commanded to give thanks always for *all things* unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And hence too, we are bidden, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God, who loved us and gave his Son a ransom for us. The feelings of the heart in prayer should be conformed to these great facts, and flow out in obedience to these high requirements. Our pleadings at the throne of grace should be wholly in his name and for the glory of God. Our prostration of soul before the Infinite One should find its lowest depths in the fact that sin in us affects his glory. Our bitterest lamentations, poured forth to the ear of God, should be moved by the fact that we bear so little of his image—breathe so little of his spirit, and feel so little of gratitude and love to him in view of what he

has done for us. Our highest intercessory plea for others ought to be that in their new creation and holy living, Christ may see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Oh, for a heart filled with such humility—such gratitude—a heart filled with such absorbing regard for the glory of God!

7. *We may pray in the name of Christ and for the glory of God, and yet not pray with sufficient faith.* We speak here of faith as it respects the answer to prayer. The want of this affects much the action of the mind. It affects the using of means in connection with prayer—affects perseverance in our pleadings—our praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and our watching thereunto. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If we ask for what we know is agreeable to the will of God, and receive it not, it is because we ask amiss—because we ask with doubts in the heart—with unbelief in the soul. Any want of confidence in God to hear our prayer is and must be offensive to him. This is to be our confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he will hear us. Any feeling which comes short of this is offensive to him. Let us then rise to this high assurance. We have not received the spirit of bondage—but that of adoption, whereby we may cry Abba, Father. Let us then, brethren, enlarge our desires and open wide our mouths unto God. Let us take fast hold of the promises of the everlasting covenant and plead like Jacob, when he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Oh, for Zion's sake let us not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake hold not our peace till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Many considerations might be urged to guard us against such faults in prayer; against such "iniquity in our holy things." *Such things in prayer are peculiarly offensive to God.* Sin in prayer seems exceedingly sinful. In this act we come more immediately into the presence of God. We speak to him who searches the heart, who sees through every disguise, and whose eye is fixed upon the thoughts and feelings of the inner man. How offensive, then, must it be to him when the tongue speaks more than the heart feels; when the order in the objects of prayer is reversed, and our own little, temporal interests are allowed a pre-eminence in our feelings far beyond those which concern his kingdom and glory; when we confess sin without any fixed determination to forsake it, or ask for wisdom without any settled purpose to follow it when given! How displeasing must it be to him for us to ask blessings which we mean to consume upon our pleasures, or to see us moved by motives which are selfish—which are far beneath those that ought to prompt every petition in prayer, or to behold in us, while asking, doubts whether we shall indeed have what he has promised to give us! How offensive must these things be to him!

Again: *the consequences of such things are most painful.* Wrong action must always be attended with unhappy results. Such action as we have noticed injures the Christian. God works in him in his working. He sanctifies the heart of the Christian as he uses the means of

grace. If he does not pray as he should; if he sins in coming before God, he will not be heard; he will be sent empty away, and hardness will come into his soul. He will reap as he sows. If he regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him, and he will sink under all the terrible consequences of unanswered prayer. But this is not all. In thus affecting the Christian, *these things greatly injure others.* In the economy of grace, whatever touches the Christian touches those around him. If his light is put under a bushel, then they are in darkness. God acts upon others through the Christian, and bestows immense blessings upon them in answer to his fervent supplications. If he comes down, therefore, from the mount of vision —down from the place of holy intercession—and offends God in asking amiss, the windows of heaven will be closed, and no dew will descend upon the mountains of Israel. Men will live on in sin, and perish in their iniquities, and their blood will be required at his hand.

1. Our subject may teach us *why prayer is so often unanswered.* Much supplication is constantly ascending to God. We have often prayed that God would make us holy; that he would enlighten our minds; that he would fill us with all the fulness of God; and that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened, and that we might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. We have often prayed for the prosperity of the Church, for the extension of Christ's kingdom, for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the conversion of men. And yet where is the answer to these prayers? Where is our growth in grace and in knowledge? Where is that abounding in every good work, that depth of love, that purity of heart, that beauty of holiness, for which we have prayed? Where is that prosperity of the Church, those outpourings of the Spirit, for which so much prayer has ascended to God? Why, brethren, this sad result? Is there not a hindrance somewhere? And may it not be in the fact, *that we ask amiss?*

2. Our subject shows us the *necessity of great self-examination in times of spiritual declension*—in times when the converting influences of the Spirit are withheld from us. It may be taken for certainty, we think, that at such times Christians are not praying as they should, that they ask amiss, and hence "the heaven is made as iron and the earth as brass." Let us search, brethren, and see if this be not the reason at present why we hear of so few revivals of religion in our churches. Let us enter upon this work in serious earnestness, and ascertain whether there is not something in our prayers, or connected with them, which is offensive to God; something which hinders the blessing, and covers us with darkness and poverty. Let us, above all things, look up and ask, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be *any wicked* way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

3. We see, moreover, in view of what has been said, *why we should ask, most importunately, "Lord, teach us to pray."* As so much depends upon the manner and spirit of our supplications; as interests so high

may be affected injuriously by our asking amiss, we ought most fervently to seek assistance in this duty from above. We know not how to pray as we ought. But there is a provision of mercy for us here in the economy of grace. The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, teaches us how to pray, how to frame our petitions, how to come before the Lord, and how to bow ourselves before the high God. He can give us the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, and work in us that deep and pure spirit of intercession—that fervent, effectual prayer, which availeth much. For this aid, therefore, we ought to pray much. We feel the necessity of the Spirit's influence in conversion, but do we feel the same necessity of his working in us to will and to do in our devotions, in teaching us how to pray as we should?

4. In the light of our subject we see also *why the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* They ask amiss—wholly so. The offensiveness is not in the sacrifice, but in the feelings with which it is made; in the motives which prompt them to make it. These are entirely selfish. There is no love in the heart to God. They turn away the ear from hearing the law, hence their prayer is an abomination. They regard iniquity in their hearts; therefore, the Lord does not, and will not, hear them. They must cease to do evil; must put away the evil of their doings from before his eyes, ere they can be heard, ere their sacrifice will cease to be an abomination to the Lord.

We do not say, indeed, as has sometimes been said, that men, while impenitent, should not pray, or, at least, that they should not be urged to do so. They ought to pray, and they ought to be pressed to this, just as really as to any other plain and positive duty. The fact of their impenitence furnishes no excuse for disobedience to any command of God. Sin can never justify sin. But we do say to such men, that they must not expect to be heard while they continue in their impenitence; while they refuse to love God and keep his commandments. They sin if they live without prayer; and they sin also if they engage in this duty with wrong feelings and with improper motives. In either case, they act under a fearful accountability. In view, therefore, of the consequence, in either case, to them, and to those who are affected by their example, we may well exclaim in the words of inspiration, O that they were wise, that they understood this, and that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear God and keep all his commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!

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SERMON CCCLX.*

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THE LESSONS OF CALAMITY.

"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—Luke xiii. 4, 5.

It was one of the characteristic excellences which marked the teachings of our Saviour, that he preached, in the highest and best sense of that phrase, to the times, and his ministry was thus *a word in season*. He addressed himself to men's present duties, and their present sins and snares; and the passing events of the day, or the scenery of the spot where he taught, furnished him with ready and apposite illustrations. The news of a cruel butchery, or a melancholy calamity; the tidings that told of the Galileans slaughtered over their sacrifices; or of the unhappy victims in Siloam, crushed by a falling tower—the news that for the time was the burden of *all* tongues, and made all ears to tingle, was seized by him as affording the occasion of riveting some keen truth upon the memory and conscience of the multitude. And thus it might be, and ought to be, with us. The journals of the day, too often taken up but in the gratification of an idle curiosity, that seeks ever to learn and tell some new thing, might preach to us of Providence and Eternity. We might consult them to see, in the changes they record, how God is governing his own world, with a care that never slumbers, and a wisdom that never falters. For all that occurs, from the fall of a dying sparrow to the crash of an empire overthrown, is but as He bids or permits it, who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."†

An event such as that upon which our Redeemer commented, has occurred amongst ourselves. In the metropolis of our nation, the seat of our government, where so much of the intellect of the nation is congregated, and whence so wide an influence goes forth to the ends of our land, death has made recently its fell inroads. The shadows of the

* A Discourse, on occasion of the explosion in the U. S. ship of war, Princeton, near Washington, on the 28th Feb., 1844, by which the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Navy, with others, lost their lives. Delivered before the Amity street Baptist Church, Sabbath morning, 3d March, and before the Oliver street Baptist Church, Sabbath evening, 10th March, 1844.

† Daniel iv. 35.

sepulchre have fallen, as in sudden and disastrous eclipse, upon the high places of our republic. A new vessel of war, built with lavish expenditure, in which science had shown her terrible skill in inventing new engines of death of fearful potency, had become to that city the theme of general curiosity and admiration. Hundreds of guests thronged her decks. Some of them were the young, the gay, and the fashionable; others were the aged, the experienced and the influential, citizens distinguished by the station they occupied, or the talents they had displayed. Little did that stately vessel, beneath a brilliant sky, in her holiday trim, and with her exulting company, seem the fitting scene for auguries of disaster, or the intrusion of distress. Below, all was merriment and gaiety, whilst the laugh, the jest, and the song, were intermingled with their feastings. The spot consecrated in the hearts of this nation, as that of the abode and last resting-place of the Father of his country, was near. The memory of the mighty dead was not forgotten by the inmates of that vessel as she floated along. But alas! death was much nearer to that rejoicing throng, than in the tomb where reposed the mortal remains of Washington. "Couched in grim repose," the destroyer had already marked fresh and nearer prey. Above, on the deck of that majestic ship, preparations are made to discharge anew the piece of ordnance already so famed for its destructive power, but soon to obtain yet more disastrous fame. Men eminent in station, acting some of them in the cabinet of our Chief Magistrate, as his chosen advisers, and one of their number but a few days installed in his high trust, had gathered around. The discharge took place. Amid the smoke and din, shrieks were heard. When that smoke had passed away, the newly invented engine of destruction was seen itself a ruin, after having made that deck a scene of desolation and carnage. Two of the ministers of our government, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Navy, with others of the distinguished visiters, lay on that blood-bespattered deck, disfigured and mutilated, either breathless or gasping their last. How startling and hideous the contrast between the scenes which but the narrow breadth of that deck then separated; the mangled, the dying and the dead, who were above it, and their nearest relatives, their daughters and their wives, who, cheerful and unconscious, were gathered in joyous groups below it, as yet utterly ignorant of the appalling reality. Those thus suddenly deprived of friends had discerned, in the shock of the discharge, no unwonted and foreboding sounds, nor did they dream of the irreparable bereavement that one brief moment had brought upon its wings of doom. Who shall paint the anguish of an attached wife, that had gone forth in the morning radiant in happiness and hope, but who was now to return at evening to a desolate home and an orphan charge, a new-made widow, meeting her fatherless babes with the cry of Naomi in her heart: "Call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me, for I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty;"—of daughters held back by friendly violence, from the sight of a father's mangled remains—of children left in an instant fatherless,

and of friends who had gone forth to begin together a day of rejoicing, but its evening closed on the survivor mournfully bringing back his dead. The station of several of the victims, the presence of their dearest kindred, and the festive occasion that had assembled them, all heightened the horror of the scene. In the tumultuous and irrepressible distress of the hour, the mercy might perhaps be forgotten that was yet intermingled with the calamity—the guardian care that had given to the multitude endangered, so narrow an escape. For the time, dismay, amazement and horror, filled all hearts. Yet, as it is now easy to see, mercy had watched even over that scene of carnage, and lightened the weight of the infliction, or how easily might a far more sweeping desolation have occurred; and of the hundreds there embarked, but a few frenzied survivors only might have escaped the general wreck, each ready in his distraction to deem himself alone in his deliverance, and each eager to say in the language of those messengers who came with heavy tidings to the patriarch: "I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

"Hear ye the rod," cried the prophet, "and who hath appointed it." Such is the command of our God, by his servant Micah, to the community thus suddenly and sorely visited. Does calamity befal us, it is not voiceless. It was no blind chance that launched the bolt. Trouble springs not out of the dust, nor is it dumb. The Scriptures give speech and articulate utterance as it were, to each such bereavement; and, as the tomb opens to receive its new tenants, a still small voice is heard issuing from its dim chambers, a voice of remonstrance and warning, of tender expostulation and compassionate entreaty. And as our text shows us, we have not only the warrant of our Saviour's example, for making such seasons the occasion of religious instruction; but we have here, in the records of the evangelist, the exact lessons which such scenes of sudden and public calamity were intended to illustrate and to enforce. May His Spirit enable us rightly to read, and honestly to apply, them.

Some of the judgments of the Divine Providence need no interpreter. Sorrow and guilt are, in the natural workings of man's conscience, and in the general estimate of mankind, closely conjoined. And there are times, as when a Nadab perishes before the altar he has desecrated, or an Uzzah is blasted beside the ark—as when the storm of fire comes down upon the cities of the plain, or the ark of Noah rides on the whelming waters past the hapless and despairing sinners who had derided his warnings—when God's judgments follow so closely man's transgressions, that he who runs may read the purport of the visitation, and see in the peculiar guilt of the sufferers, the reason of their peculiar fate. But it is not always so. Men are, in our days, as in the times of the Saviour they were, prone, on hearing of some strange and sudden calamity, to indulge themselves in rash and uncharitable judgments. They think of the sufferers as more careless or more criminal than others, and suppose them to have become thus the victims of an avenging Providence. Judging of character as the mass of mankind do, merely from the success which attends it, attributing excellence when

they see prosperity, and imputing guilt or weakness where they discover the presence of adversity, they adopt the rule on which Job's friends so tenaciously and cruelly insisted, that calamity is proof of crime; a rule that, in the use of it by those misguided patriarchs, God so signally disavowed and rebuked. It was on this same false principle that the Saviour himself was judged by his own countrymen and cotemporaries, "We," said the prophet, speaking by anticipation in the name of his people—"we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And was he not heavily afflicted, stricken most sorely, and was it not God that smote and bruised him? It was indeed so; but not, as they supposed, for the peculiar sins of the sufferer himself. "The Man of Sorrows," on whom all griefs centered, was yet "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." In our text, the Redeemer, as he speaks of the slaughtered Galileans, and of the falling tower, rebukes this spirit of rash judgment. He does not deny, indeed, that sin was found in Pilate's victims, and in those who died at Siloam: but he asks; "Were they *sinners more than others?* Were they more deserving this fate than *yourselves;* Except ye repent, ye shall *all likewise perish.*" The connection which the mind of man traces, instinctively as it were, between sin and suffering, is not to be made to concentrate upon the individual, but rather to rebound back on the conscience of the race; not to rest on the head of the stranger who perishes, but rather on the heart of the survivor who witnesses it, and who, were God but strict in the immediate exaction of punishment, deserves to share the ruin which he has but beheld.

We cannot, then, misinterpret Providence, when we have thus the comments of the Lord himself, who wields the sceptre of the universe. It is the Legislator of the world, sitting to interpret his own statutes, and to expound the reasons of his own procedure. He teaches us, that the fate of one is the desert of all; that as sinners we all merit a sudden and violent end, and that except we repent, we ultimately and universally perish. These are humbling truths, it must be confessed, but they are salutary. Let us ponder them, in the order in which our Saviour's language presents them.

I. All of us are sinners.

Christ's hearers were such as well as the Galileans, the survivors as well as the sufferers, and we as well as those whose death we deplore.

II. All of us are liable to sudden death.

III. Death to the impenitent sinner is destruction.

IV. Repentance is our only safeguard from eventual ruin.

I. We are all sinners. "*Think ye they were sinners above all men? I tell you, Nay:* but except *ye* repent, *ye* shall *all* likewise perish."

The fact of man's sinfulness is one scarce needing to be argued. The conscience of the world and the history of the world, are here in accord with the Scriptures of the world's Maker and Judge. Our own observation and the experience of those around us, who have been most and longest conversant with Human Nature, and our complaints against our fellow men, attest the melancholy truth which Scripture ut-

ters in no dubious terms. When God looked down from heaven to behold the children of men, he saw "none good, no not one." We are each, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. We may dispute the statement as to ourselves, and a few select favorites, but we are generally prone not only to admit but to assert it of the mass of society. Our complaints of governments and whole classes of society and entire nations, show that we do not deem the multitude of mankind faultless. What page of the world's history is not blotted with tears and stained with blood—tears which man's misconduct has wrung from the eyes of suffering weakness—blood which man's violence has shed? But we need not go to men's vices to prove their sinfulness; it is proved too sufficiently by their very virtues. For what virtue save that exhibited in the one character of Christ, is perfect, symmetrical, stainless? The confessions of men, like Daniel, the man greatly beloved of heaven, under the old dispensation, and the defects of John, the beloved disciple of Christ under the new dispensation, are decisive as to the defective and imperfect character of man on the earth. And if not sinners, what need, again, had the race of a Redeemer? By the heights of glory from which the Ransomer needed to plunge when he rescued us, I may gauge the depths of debasement and guilt into which the ransomed had sunk; and the moral demerit of the first Adam may be inferred from the tremendous sacrifice, and the infinite dignity demanded in the second Adam, who came to deliver and to save him. Let us remember our sinfulness that we may know our true position before the Holy Ruler of the universe. We are not the innocent beings which He at first made us. We were formed upright, but we have "sought out many inventions," and perverse and rebellious inventions they have been. The guilt is our own, an invention of mankind. Hence it is, and not by any original perversion in our creation, that sorrow and anguish have entered our world, and become the heritage of our race. Bereavement and death are strangers, who have intruded into God's happy universe, and for whose admission into our own world, our own hands have torn a pathway. The very presence of death is evidence of sin. "Death" entered "by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all men have sinned."* And when we view its ravages in those we love, or but read its record in the obituary or upon the gravestone, we are admonished afresh of that truth uttered beside the cross of the world's Redeemer. The lips of the dying thief then, at least, spoke truly, and what he said to an expiring companion, belongs as justly to each one of our dying race, "Thou art in the same condemnation." Afflictions and bereavements, the removal of our friends, the calamities witnessed in the high places of our land, are proofs of our common sinfulness.

But though afflictions prove our *common* sinfulness, they afford in this world no test as to our *comparative* sinfulness. The man less afflicted here on earth is not therefore more holy than his neighbor who is more

* Romans v. 12.

afflicted. The towers of Siloam fell, while turrets in more guilty districts of Jerusalem stood immoveable. The hapless Galilean mingled his blood with his sacrifices at the altar, while the more guilty Caiaphas was permitted to wear undisturbed his pontifical tiara, and the wretched Judas yet possessed, in comparative security, the dignity and privileges of the Apostleship. But the death of the poor peasants from the shores of Gennesareth, on the one hand, and the lengthened life of the high priest, and of the false apostle, on the other hand, were no proofs that the earliest victims were the chiefest sinners. Pilate, who had commanded the massacre, was doubtless, in the sight of God, although still surviving, a greater offender than those men whom he had butchered. When our Heavenly Father singles out a man, as the subject of an afflictive dispensation, it is no proof that he is peculiarly guilty above all his fellows.

Again, when God sends a sweeping visitation on a people, he often involves the righteous and the wicked in an indiscriminate death. It is not, indeed, always so; at times God sees fit to make distinctions even in this life in behalf of his servants that fear him. This it was for which Abraham pleaded when the storm was gathering over the devoted cities of the plain. "To slay the righteous with the wicked—that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This it was in which the Psalmist trusted, and in which he exhorted others to trust. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." And thus it was that the three Hebrew children walked unharmed in the heart of that furnace, whose fiery mouth destroyed others that came near only to feed its flames. And thus it was that Daniel sat unharmed amid lions who brake of his adversaries every bone in their body ere they reached the bottom of the den. God may specially preserve his servants from afflictions that destroy others. He did it, perhaps, more under the Old Testament dispensation than under the New, because the earlier dispensation was especially one of temporal rewards and deliverances, and of prompt punishments. But under either economy, God often has seen fit to make the righteous and the sinner fall indiscriminately in some common calamity. It had been so, in the days of Solomon, and he observed it: "All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked—to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not."* He observed it, we say, and not yet having reached the conclusion which he ultimately attained, and with which he shuts up his book,† the bringing of every work in eternity to a just judgment; not yet having found (for the book is a diary of doubts ending in certainty, and inquiries that grope after and at last clutch the truth),—not yet having gained the clue to the mystery, and the solution of his difficulties, a clue and solution which he afterwards found in the retributions of the last judgment, he for the time exclaimed, as he beheld the common fate of the good and the bad: "This is an evil

* Eccles. ix. 2. † Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all."* In days long preceding those of this wise monarch, the same fact had been perceived and lamented. Job mournfully exclaimed, that in times of sudden and general calamity, the righteous perished with his ungodly neighbor. "If the scourge slay suddenly, he (it) will laugh at the trial of the innocent."† In other words, when the instrument of the divine vengeance is uplifted, be the rod what it may, it makes a wide and fell swoop, and it scorns to linger that it may draw distinctions between the innocent and the guilty. The distinction is left to the eternal world. It is drawn sufficiently at the bar of Final Judgment. "*Then* shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked."‡ For piety in the best is no safeguard from death, or from a sudden, a violent, a painful, or a shameful end.

Often, in fact, the guilt of a sinful community may fall most heavily on the heads of its most innocent members. When the righteous Josiah fell in battle with the king of Egypt, the sins of the guilty Jews lighted on the head of their pious monarch. And so when Naboth perished in the days of Ahab, and Zachariah was stoned between the porch and the altar, and James the Apostle was beheaded by Herod to please the people of the Jews, each of the victims was taken away, in fact, not so much because of his own sins, as because of the sins of others who survived him. "The righteous is taken from the evil to come." The nation is left with an intercessor less to avert the coming vengeance; and often with one enormity more to swell their coming account. One more twig is withdrawn from the lessening dyke that as yet shuts out the rising flood of wrath and ruin from a guilty land.

A similarity of fate is then no proof of an equal sinfulness. Go with me to the camp of Israel a. they are entering the Promised Land. A curse from God has retarded the advance of their armies. They have selected one individual as the cause of their disasters. And they are stoning him in the valley of Achor. Let us go down some centuries later in the stream of their history. Accompany me again, and without the walls of Jerusalem I show you a similar victim enduring the like fate. But the resemblance in their fate proves no similarity in their character; for the one of these hapless sufferers is Achan, the troubler of Israel, and the other is the righteous Stephen, who dies with his face shining like that of an angel, blesses with parting breath his ferocious murderers, and lifts heavenwards eyes that have been already purged from earthly films, to discern the Son of Man standing in glory and power at the right hand of the Father, a Saviour waiting to welcome and to crown the protomartyr of his Church. The same disaster that sweeps one soul away to the horrors of eternal despair, may waft another to the endless harpings of heaven: and angels and demons may hover over the same field of death, commissioned the one to bear their exulting charge to the Father's home, the other to drag

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* Eccles. ix. 3. † Job ix. 23. ‡ Malachi iii. 18.

their despairing prey to the abodes of wailing, to be plunged into the pit of unquenchable fire.

While death, then, proves us all sinful, the mode of our death affords no standard of our relative sinfulness. The murderer may, like the elder Herod, die on his pillow, while the martyr of Christ expires on the rack. And the same judgment which admits one of its victims to the rest of Paradise, may consign another, who perished at his side, to the flames of hell.

If any of my hearers are slow to allow their own sinfulness, slow to feel the justice of the Saviour's warning as to their own case, and that, except they repent, they shall likewise perish, we would urge upon their consideration but one more fact as bearing on the question of their sinfulness. Your dread of death, that instinctive horror of the grave which all feel, what is it but an implied confession of unworthiness and want of moral fitness for the change dissolution brings? Man's fear of death is itself, we say, proof of sin. For believing, as well nigh all of us do, that death will bring us nearer to God, and place us more immediately than before in his presence, we must also acknowledge that he to whom death thus approximates us is the holiest, and best, and happiest of beings. To enjoy the nearer society of such a being, must then be increased felicity to all the good. If we were really holy, would not the anticipation of such admission to the presence of God be the highest solace to be found amid the cares and conflicts of life? Should we not long for the day of our introduction to the presence-chamber of the great King; and, in the language of the poet of Methodism, should we not "press to the issues of death?" Should we not habitually, with Paul, long to depart? But we do, in fact, dread death. And that we do thus shrink from it, involving, as that event does, a nearer approach to God, is in itself an impeachment of our moral character. To have a dislike of God's society is in itself a sinful state of feeling. It is a confession, on our part, of the want of holiness, and of the requisite sympathy with pure and heavenly beings. This dread of death may be regarded as an unconscious reminiscence of our old and original state of sinlessness, and its forfeited privileges. Then the presence of God, when he visited the garden of Eden, was the delight and glory of our unfallen parents. But soon as they sinned, his presence became formidable. It was that of the detector and the avenger: and they shrank from the blaze of eyes too pure to look upon iniquity. Let men talk as they may of their own moral blamelessness before God, and of the moral dignity of the race, the general dread of death is in itself the acknowledgment of a state of heart that could not exist in a sinless being. It is this sense of moral defect and demerit that arms the destroyer with his terrors, and that points and envenoms the dart with which he threatens us. The *sting* of death is sin.

II. From the truth of our common sinfulness we pass to one of its consequences, our common liability to a death that may be unexpected

and violent. We are all liable to sudden death. "Except ye repent, ye shall all *likewise* perish." And this is the second division of our remarks.

That each of us is exposed to sudden death is a truth none will dispute, yet, like other undeniable truths, it is not sufficiently remembered. As death is the original penalty of sin, and the first existence of sin in us incurred that dread punishment, God has at any time, and however suddenly, a right to exact from us the penalty. And there is wisdom and mercy in his making the execution sudden. It is the more startling to others, our fellow offenders. The possibility of it, and our apprehension of it, may restrain us from many a sin into which we might else have rushed, had we been assured of any long term of impunity, or any protracted interval between our transgression and our removal. It is kind, we say, in our heavenly Father, by these sudden deaths, to set up mementoes, as it were, of man's mortality, in all our scenes of business and amusement; that we may thus in no spot feel ourselves entitled to forget him; and that he may thus hedge up the way of the transgressor with salutary terrors, by letting in upon every point the dread light of eternity, and making each eminence along the pathway command the prospect of an opening grave.

And in the accomplishment of that sentence of death which man's sin has provoked, how various are the means employed. Naught is so trivial but that God can make it the executioner of his vengeance, be it the worm that smote the pride of Herod, or the smooth pebble of the brook that cleft the brow of Goliah. Naught is so vast and unwieldy but that it readily lends itself to accomplish suddenly man's removal into eternity. The air, with all the winds and storms that store its arsenals, the waters, and the solid earth, are ready to do his bidding, and avenge his quarrel with his creature, man. The first deluge of water, and the last deluge of fire, either serves, at his pleasure, to purge his earth of sinners. But, besides these more stately and solemn messengers, how many less noticeable emissaries has he at his command. The starting of a horse, the obstructed valve of an engine, a failing plank in the vessel's side, a sunken rock no navigator has discovered and designated on no chart, a misplaced step, a falling tile—all may be his effectual messengers. And so in any scene, the ballroom, the theatre, the warehouse, or the highway, as well as in the home, we may be summoned. Death has all seasons and all scenes for his own. Invited to a festive excursion, we may, for aught that we know, be but decking ourselves as smiling and garlanded victims for the place of sacrifice. Such was the coming of the last messenger to those whose death has cast a gloom over the face of our land.

Now, if death be ever terrible, he is especially so when his coming is sudden. When, instead of making sickness and slow decay his forerunners, he dispenses with these harbingers and appears unannounced, his coming makes many a stout heart quail. The thread we had looked to see slowly attenuated and long drawn out, is snapped, as with a stroke, rudely and for ever. Life, with its cares, and hopes, and vani-

ties, and eternity, with its tremendous retributions, are brought into startling proximity, and seem the more strongly contrasted. But chiefly is sudden death terrible, because many, even of those habitually ready for another world, feel as if they would wish some interval between the secular business of this life and its close, some span, not only to set their house in order, but to scrutinize their own hopes for eternity, and fit the soul for its dread change as it hovers on the verge of another world. But to the sinner how awful is it to be cut off from his cherished hope that he may be allowed, before quitting earth, a brief preparation! This great work, which should be his first care, he, from a desire of enjoying the world, makes his last; and defers to the hurry, delirium, and feebleness of a death-bed the great business of a life-time. To cut him off suddenly is, then, to deprive him of his favorite resort, and to flood, in stern vengeance, that refuge of lies in which he had proposed to take a final shelter from the wrath of God, when he might no longer enjoy his idols. He had purposed to give to the ways of sin the strength of his faculties, and to pour on God's altars the last poor dregs of the wine-cup of life: to make youth, and health, and zeal, and influence, and energy a burnt-offering to Satan, and then to carry the poor offals of the sacrifice, age, feebleness, and sickness, to Christ. An unexpected death shuts him out from this refuge, where he has risked and lost his all.

But there are those to whom death, and even sudden death, is not terrible. Some, like the British Christian, whose frequent prayer, answered as it was in the mode of his removal, is inscribed on his tomb, have longed for an instantaneous summons, and exclaimed, "Sudden death, sudden glory." To them the King of Terrors had lost his ghastliness, and seemed, in their eyes, but the angel Death, commissioned by the Father to release them from cares and sins, enfranchise them from all the assaults of temptation, and admit them, introduced by the hand of the Mediator, to all the glories and all the joys of the beatific vision.

It is not then the *circumstances* of our death, be it violent and disastrous, or otherwise,—be it sudden or lingering, that should be the chief question. It is rather the *character* of the dying man, the moral image he carries into the world of spirits. What are his relations to God? Let me die the death of the *righteous*, be it violent or peaceful, be it slow decay or some sudden stroke, be it solitary or amid companions and friends, be it a rude and agonizing dislodgement of the soul from the body, or a gentle and noiseless lapse, as of one falling asleep in Christ.

III. For, and this is the third division of our remarks, death to the sinner is destruction, and consequently sudden death is, to such, but sudden damnation. This is implied in the Saviour's language: "Ye shall all likewise *perish*."

Now, this could not mean the future destruction of the Jewish people in the fall of Jerusalem, for many sinners among his hearers died

in their beds before the storm of God's wrath burst in all its fierceness upon that guilty and doomed city, and ere there were seen yet, even as specks in the distant horizon, the Roman eagles gathering eagerly to the prey. Nor could it be a violent death, by sword or falling tower, like that of the Galileans or the people of Siloam; for we cannot suppose, with any show of reason, that all the enemies of Christ among the Jews, who did not perish by the Roman war, died by some other painful end. Nor could it be any mere death of the body that he intended, for he speaks of it as something which repentance, and repentance alone, could enable them to avoid. Now, from the death of the body, repentance does not save the man. The penitent must enter the shroud and the coffin as well as his ungodly neighbor. But the evil from which repentance does save us, is eternal destruction; and this, therefore, our Saviour intends when he uses the word "*perishing*." It is the eternal ruin that awaits the dying sinner.

Death, although often used but in that narrow sense, includes more than the corruption and decay of the body. We are in arrears to a violated law. The dissolution of the body is but the first instalment of our debt. Death is often spoken of as the debt of nature. More justly it might be termed the debt of sin; for our nature, whilst sinless, as it came from the Maker's plastic hand, was not mortal. The destruction of the body, then, is but a partial satisfaction of the debt which sin owes to the justice of God. And if you observe the margin of our text, you will perceive that a literal rendering of the word is: "Were they *debtors* more than others?" The diseases and pains, the decay and dissolution of the body, are but the earlier instalments of the vast penalty. Behind it comes the loss of the soul when in the resurrection the body has been revivified and re-united to the soul, its old associate in sin, and both are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, and with it eventually sinners "perish" by a ruin, endless, remediless, and hopeless.

The death of the body is but a transient act, the portal through which we pass into the far eternity beyond. It puts, indeed, an indelible imprint on a man's character. It leaves the filthy eternally filthy, and the holy unalterably holy; stripping the one of all hope, as it exempts the other from all fear, of a change. It snaps for ever the bond that binds the believer, while on earth, to care, and temptation, and conflict; and it also sunders the ties of opportunity, mercy, and hope, that surrounded and held up the unbeliever, while in this world of probation. Death is not, as the journalist, too often, in the case of the suicide, terms it, "a termination of existence." This is phraseology said to have come in upon us, with the Atheism of the French Revolution.* Man, at death, it may rather be said, but begins to exist, in the highest sense of that word. His being is developed, and he has higher powers, and wider knowledge, and keener feelings, when made a disembodied spirit. And when skepticism would write, as did Revolu-

* President Dwight.

tionary France, over the gateway of the cemetery, the inscription: "Death is an eternal sleep," the saddened eye of faith reads, in its stead, the more true but melancholy sentence over the graves of those who have lived and died without hope and without God in the world: "And I looked and beheld a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, *and Hell followed with him.*"* On the dissolution of the body, follows, in the case of the ungodly, Hell with all its trooping terrors, though its fulness of anguish and its last torments may be reserved for the day of judgment.

How awful is the exchange which the sinner makes at death! "In that very day his thoughts perish;" his vain expectations of worldly enjoyments, of impunity in sin, and of a final season and space for repentance; his earthly plans; and all his rivalries, hopes and fears, which regarded exclusively the life that then suddenly closed its gates on him and closed them for ever. For his pleasures he has endless pain. During life, nothing could utterly extinguish hope within him; now, during eternity, nothing can rekindle it. From a world of religious privileges, and sacred times, and gracious invitations, he goes to a world that has no Sabbaths, no mercy-seat, no Advocate, no influences of the Spirit, not a promise, not a hope. On making the sad exchange, how must his forfeited and vanishing blessings brighten in his view, as they take their everlasting flight. How strangely contrasted, though drawn by the same hand, would be the two pictures of this world drawn by the sinner's spirit, when as yet without, and again when passed within, the veil that hides the eternal world. While yet in the body, and on this side the intervening barrier between the world of sense and show, and the world of reality, sense and self were all; time was as eternity, and eternity was brief and valueless as time. But now, entered on the further world, and when both are known by experience, eternity appears in its true infinitude, and time shrinks and dwindles into its proper littleness. Now Heaven and Hell are no longer dreams, and Christ is recognized as really a Saviour, King, and God; but a God now alienated, a King defied and incensed, whose power pervades all space and permits no escape, and a Saviour whose favor is forfeited irrecoverably and for ever.

Well were it for us if we kept these consequences of death more steadily before us. For this purpose, our Heavenly Father makes the lessons of our mortality so frequent, impressive, and various. The dead are quietly glancing upon the student from the shelves of his library. History is but, in a great measure, spoils won from the grave, or a compilation of the epitaphs of those who have gone before us. Nor is it literature only that is thus redolent of the tomb. Each scene of retired and domestic life has its avenues of memory and regret that lead back to the grave. Every household has its seat by the table and the hearth, now vacant, where once was seen a face now hidden and buried out of sight, and where once was heard a voice now stilled in the

* Rev. vi. 8.

silence of the sepulchre. Who may build himself a mansion, however stored with all that can adorn or gladden life, and say, over this threshold the coffin shall not pass? The funeral hearse rolls on its way past the doors of the ball-room and the theatre. In the pulpit and at the bar, in the Senate chamber or on the main-deck, we see the place of the departed, or the scene, it may even be, of their departure. Thus "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse;"* and death is made to unroll its solemn commission, and publish its stern testimony in our thronged thoroughfares. Thus, in our own city, the most populous of our graveyards, with vegetation all rank, and a soil fattened by the accumulated corpses of a century, draws its sad length beside our most crowded street, as if it would throw out a dyke to stem the torrent of frivolity and fashion, each day rushing by; and the field of death looks down from its silent eminence, upon the long line of banking-houses, and the street of our busiest trafficking, as if a skeleton hand were beckoning from the spirit land to our merchant princes, and bidding them with all their gettings to get wisdom, and to consider their latter end that they may be really wise.

For death to the unprepared is the shipwreck of all hopes and the destruction of all happiness. But how shall we be prepared?

IV. And thus we reach our fourth and closing division. Repentance is our only safeguard. "*Except ye repent*, ye shall all likewise perish."

To prepare for death, the world knows no fitter method than to forget what cannot be evaded, and to drown all serious reflection in the din of business and amid the tumult of revelry. It is like bandaging the eyes to screen us from an exploding battery. The less we reflect, the greater, in fact, our danger of rushing blind-folded into ruin. It is such preparation as Joab gave Amasa when he grasped his beard as in friendly greeting, and asked of his health, whilst seeking the fatal spot where a single stroke would be sure and speedy death—a preparation it is that disarms, indeed, of anxiety and suspicion, and relieves us of intrusive fears, but that, at the same time, robs us of life and seals us to ruin. Not such the method of Scripture. It may alarm, but it alarms to save. It bids you prepare for death by retreating for protection from the impending destruction to that impregnable refuge, the Saviour's cross. There the penitent finds balm for his wounds, pardon for his sins, and life, eternal life, for his death.

For "the sting of death is sin." To remove sin is, therefore, the only mode of depriving the grave of its victory, and rendering the King of Terrors not only harmless but beneficent. How shall sin be removed but by renouncing it; and how can we renounce it but in Christ's strength; or how can our repentance be accepted but through his intercession, or our sins be forgiven but through his righteousness,

* Prov. i. 20.

or our bodies, once consigned to the grave, be released from its prison, but as his resurrection becomes the pledge of ours? A true repentance grasps the cross.

Death, then, preaches repentance. What John the Baptist cried in the wilderness, and Jesus of Nazareth in the streets of Jerusalem, this recent visitation of Divine Providence is proclaiming throughout our land, as from its high places of dignity and influence: "Repent ye. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Let the community repent, like Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and she may escape sore and impending judgments. What woes were those that overtook the Jewish people because they refused the command and repented not? Let a nation be exalted and enriched, as is our own, with physical and moral advantages, with all religious and civil privileges, an impenitent and godless spirit is yet sufficient to squander them all, and leave corruption, disunion, decay and subjection, as her final heritage. Let her, on the other hand, however afflicted and debased, but repent; and God can restore her from the deepest degradation, exalt and bless and establish her, till she that was servant of servants comes to sit as a queen among the nations.

Let the individual sinner repent. It is, by the will and the oath of God, his only hope of escaping the second death and evading the horrible pit of hell, on whose verge his unhappy step already wanders. It assures him of his ultimate deliverance, not only from the fear of death, but from all fears and all care, temptation and sin; and it houses the fugitive, at last, in the bosom of God. Does he ask: How am I to repent? We answer: Not of some sins only, but of all sins. Renounce your idols. Turn to Christ for pardon. Resolve in his strength. Plead his merits and trust his cross. In his name ask for light, and follow it when given. And not only clasp but wear the cross, making it your badge before the world, as well as your plea before God; and this done, the earth sinks subjected beneath your feet, hell withdraws, baffled of its aim and spoiled of its prey, and Heaven comes nearer, the nearer you draw to the inevitable tomb.

Are you a penitent? Then, however young and feeble and obscure you may be, you are contributing to avert, as the impenitent is contributing to attract, the clouds and the resounding tempests of God's wrath. Are you careless? Careless amid death and bereavement and danger? Careless amid Sabbaths and Bibles and the Saviour's invitations, and the Spirit's stirrings? Recollect that it is no vain word, no braggart threat, but the stern law of the skies. "He, that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Let the world tell you what it will of natural innocence, and a morality of your own with which God cannot be angry, remember the world is not the law-giver or the judge in this matter. It must itself bide the law and face the Judge. That law is: Turn or perish; Repent and live. It is the fiat of your Creator, Saviour and Judge.

Repent, then, we entreat you, and be saved; for it is mercy that calls, an infinite and divine forbearance that yet waits, and Heaven itself stoops to allure, to welcome and to shelter you.

Thus have we reviewed the lessons of eternal truth our Saviour has annexed to such dispensations of his Providence, as that which we are now remembering. We have seen how each such calamity proclaims man's sinfulness, reminds us of our common and continual exposure to an end as sudden, bids us remember the destruction that waits on the death of the impenitent, and commands us to exercise that repentance which alone saves from Hell and fits for death. Each such dispensation reveals to us, as by a sudden flash, the benighted sea of life which we are traversing, and the dim shores of the eternity we are nearing. It comes from God as on a mission to man, and while it recalls to him his sin and his danger, it also announces his one hope and salvation, and bids the penitent see in the cross and tomb of his Redeemer the gates of Paradise opened anew on Calvary, to a doomed and dying race; while, to the impenitent, it tells of a death of despair, and shows, below the yawning tomb, a lower depth and the lurid fires of its torments. It compresses our business in one world, and our prospects for the next, into three brief words: REPENT OR PERISH.

In conclusion, we would remark:

1. First, on the *sins of the nation;* for each such visitation calls us to remember these. Have we not, in many things, declined from the ways of our forefathers? Could any candid and intelligent observer claim, for the mass of the statesmen of this country in our times, the high character for integrity and moral principle accorded to the fathers of the Revolution? Virtue and talent there are; but is the average of right principle in our great political parties equal to that displayed in the times of our forefathers? In the growing rapacity and corruption of public servants; in the violence of party discord and its venality; and in the madness of passion seen disgracing even the halls of national legislation by brawls; are there auguries for good, as to the destinies of the nation thus guided, and of the rising generation, thus to be trained and moulded? The desecration of the Sabbath; our national eagerness for gain—our growing luxury—the character of our widely spread and cheaper literature, much of the best of it frivolous, and much of it worse than frivolous, "sensual and devilish,"—are not all these causes for humiliation and alarm, and do they not afford, on such an occasion as this, materials for heart-searching inquiry and profound and penitent meditation? We have, as a people, many and rich mercies, but they are reviewed with safety when regarded as heightening our responsibility, and, if neglected and perverted, as enhancing the more the darkness of our guilt, and the severity of our punishment. We are a young nation, and to the community as to the individual, youth is the season of ardor, hope, and boastfulness. If there has been justice in the charge other nations have made against us, that we are given to vaunting, has not God, in the disaster with

which he has now visited us, occurring as it did in the Navy, the pride of the nation, and not long after another of our vessels of war had perished in a night at the mouth of the Mediterranean, taught us how powerless for our defence, and how powerful for our ruin, he may make our very armaments and ships of war?

> "They trust in navies, and their navies fail,
> God's curse can cast away ten thousand sail."

In the anxiety which some display to entangle our country in war, is there not shown a recklessness greatly to be deprecated? We believe government endowed, by the law of God, with power to take away human life—the life of the individual in the case of crime, and the lives of multitudes in the case of a just war. But seeing the butchery, profligacy and wretchedness which war, even when most just, must bring in its train, neither humanity nor piety allows us, for any petty cause, to employ this melancholy and last resort. We may not lightly spread through our borders such scenes as God has lately made us to behold on the deck of the Princeton. To rebuke the spirit of war may have been one merciful design of the recent calamity. It may be easy to unleash the hounds of war, and give them course over some distant territory, by issuing, amid the quiet scenes of legislation and diplomacy, the act that exposes leagues of defenceless coast to the marauder, or consigns some obscure and remote home, upon our frontiers, to pillage and slaughter, and all the tender mercies of the savage, the scalping-knife, and the firebrand. It is not as easily borne to see the ruin entering our own habitations, and the slaughter spread around and upon us. And now that God has permitted, in his wisdom, one of these gory and hideous spectacles, that are but the ordinary accompaniments of battle, to be presented, in a time of profound peace, and almost beneath the shadow of our Capitol, let us pray that the lesson may not be lost on the law-makers gathered in those halls, but that by its severe, yet salutary schooling, it may "teach our senators wisdom."* We believe war, in a just cause, not indefensible: but it may not be lightly undertaken. It is in no careless mood, and for no trivial reasons, that the rulers of this people may bring such scenes as those recently witnessed into the houses and the peaceful commercial marine of our country;—make multitudes of their countrywomen as suddenly widows; and doom, by hundreds, unconscious and prattling infants, thus summarily to orphanage, and to all the multiform sorrows and perils that beset the path of the fatherless.

2. Next, let us not forget that we have, as a nation, received from the Most High *loud and memorable warnings*. In commercial reverses, has not God checked our reckless love of gain? In the death, shortly after his installation, of a former Chief Magistrate, the first instance in the history of our country of one dying while administering that high office, and in the subsequent removal of members both from the execu-

* Ps. cv. 22.

tive and from the legislative departments of our national government, and now again in this startling calamity, is not God reading to us, as a people, lessons of humility, dependence, and penitence? In the history of our present Chief Magistrate, distinguished as he has been by the frequent and near approach of mortality to his person, whilst he himself has been spared, how has God spoken to him, and to the whole land, of the uncertainty of life, and that a higher power than man's controls the affairs of the world! Having seen, as he has done, death vacating the Presidential chair for his occupancy, and soon after vacating again, by the death of the statesman who took it, the chair of the Vice Presidency he had quitted;—his predecessor in the first office of state falling on his right hand, his successor in the second station of dignity in the land falling on his left hand;—bereaved, as he has been, by the incursions of death into the circle of his friends; bereaved in his home of a consort, who, from sharing his exaltation, passed soon to the tomb; and bereaved in his cabinet, first, of Legare, rich in promise, talents, and acquirements, and smitten down in the fullness of his strength; and now of Upshur and Gilmer, his personal as well as political friends, men of principle and talent, and possessed of the confidence of the people;—is there not much to awaken in his behalf the sympathies and prayers of the churches? Commanded as we are in Scripture, to pray for them that are in authority, should not the wish of each Christian patriot be, that a course so singularly marked may, by the grace of God, be sanctified to teach him who has run it, the uncertainty of all earthly honors, held as they are by the tenure of a life so soon spent, and often so suddenly terminated; and should not our prayer be that he who has been, like Paul, "*in deaths oft*," may also, with the Apostle, be able to say, as he reviews the course and purpose of his life, "*to me, to live is Christ*," and with Paul to add, as he looks fearlessly toward its close, "*and to die is gain?*" For difficult as is ever and in all conditions the Christian's path, and glorious as is his triumph over the world in any lot, the difficulty and the glory are each enhanced in the case of exalted station. To serve God and his generation faithfully, not in the less embarrassed walks of private life, but in a position of eminence, amid the strife of tongues, the collisions and wranglings of parties, and the thronging snares, the incessant and wasting cares, and the heavy responsibilities of public life, needs no ordinary measure of divine grace. And happy, as rare, is the worldly greatness that does not, in consequence, peril the soul of its possessor. And whether tempted unduly to envy or rashly to blame those in eminent stations, are we not as a people warned, by so many deaths in the high places of our land, when not, as is most generally the case, single victims, but whole clusters and groups are reaped for the grave,—are we not warned less eagerly to covet distinctions death so soon levels, and more habitually to trust, and more faithfully to serve, that God who only is great, for he is the unchangeable and the Almighty one "who only hath immortality?'

3. Again, do not incidents of this kind loudly call upon *the Christians*

of the land to know their rights and duties? Are they not warned, that they never, amid the fierce conflicts of party, and the din and routine of business, forget their one profession, and the high principles it involves? Ever is the Judge at hand. His coming is near; and that servant labors most wisely and most safely who does it continually, as under his Great Taskmaster's eye. In the contentions of the day, political or religious, is it not well that the image of death should often interpose itself, casting its chill and calming shadow over the feverish strifes of the hour, lest we cherish against those who oppose us such feelings as we should not wish to recall over their graves, or to be surprised by the summons of death while indulging? It seems but too evident that the churches of our day can retain their hold upon some great and vital truths only at the price of earnest controversy. Yet inevitable as it may be, and in its results most beneficial, it must also be admitted, that most adverse to piety and happiness are the feelings it too often engenders. How harshly do the censures that political antagonists or religious controversialists may utter against their opponents, sound on the ear, when once the subject of them is suddenly entombed; and how pitiable, as we now look back upon them, the exasperated personal bickerings of writers, housed in a common sepulchre. It was an affecting regret of an eminent scholar—it is Erasmus of whom we speak—in the days of the Revival of Letters, that one of his opponents had been snatched away by death, before they could exchange forgiveness for their mutual offences against the law of charity. And if to the political contests, ever eager and rife amongst us, must in this age be added the social agitation, produced by churches "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," it will be, as in the near prospect of the grave, and as in constant preparation for a sudden departure, that Christians will best be harnessed, manfully yet meekly, to defend the truth a Savior bequeathed to their charge, the legacy of a Master who overcame by suffering, and who built, as it were, out of the cross upon which he had hung, the steps of that throne where he sits a crowned conqueror. Above all, let Christians remember their duties to their country in the *closet*. That hand, out of which the prophet saw streaming beams of glory, where are the hidings of Divine Power, is opened, in blessings, to the believer kneeling in his retirement. And when the churches invoke it, that hand arms itself, as with gauntlet and glaive, for the defence of the land, or, as the Psalmist prayed, "takes hold of shield and buckler, draws out also the spear, and stops the way"* of the adversaries. Thus works the Almighty where men are found who make his right arm their reliance, and who, like Daniel, greatly beloved of Heaven, are, like him, constant in supplication before the throne, for themselves, and for their people, and for the Israel of God.

4. Death, in all its aspects, is formidable to man the sinner, except as it is viewed in its relation to the *death of Christ*. And if, from all the

* Ps. xxxv. 2, 3.

scenes of worldly pomp and rejoicing, from earth's high places of coveted dignity and influence, and from its lowliest nooks of retirement, a path is ever found leading to the grave; so, to the eye of the believer, from every scene in life, and from every theme in morals or religion, there is opened a broad and direct avenue to the grave of his Saviour. The cross of Christ is the world's hope. He who became the

"Death of death, and hell's destruction,"

was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil, "and that through death he might destroy *him that had the power of death.*"* To know him is life; to reject him is the seal of the second death, and the earnest of eternal ruin. Well, then, may Christ's sacrifice receive the prominence given it in Scripture and in the scenes of the eternal world. His death was the theme, as Moses the receiver, and Elias the reviver, of the law, talked with our Lord, on the mount, and "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."† It is the glorying of the ransomed before the throne of light. When heaven visits earth, as on the mountain of transfiguration, and when earth visits heaven, as in the ascension of the emancipated and glorified spirit to the general assembly and church of the first-born, this one event is the bond of their common fellowship, and the death upon Calvary is the basis of their common happiness. Exulting in this, the saint looks forward to the last trial as but brief, and its issue as sure and peaceful. The sinner, rejecting the benefits of this sacrifice, does it amid a world which, in spite of his irreligion, is none the less a world of bereavement and death; and on the verge of another world, in which, because of his irreligion, death can never be unstung, whose ruin has no redemption, and on whose dark and heaving sea of wo breaks no solitary beam of hope.

5. It is, lastly, the wisdom of man, born as he is the heir of mortality, to be *living in a state of constant preparation* for his great change. It was said by that sweet singer of our modern Israel, Dr. Watts, in the latter years of his life, that each night he composed himself to slumber, little anxious whether he awoke in time or in eternity. Of that ornament of the English bench, the Christian magistrate, Sir Matthew Hale, it is said that he was once administering justice, when a strange darkness overspreading the country, joined with some idle predictions that had become current, filled men's minds with alarm, as if the end of the world had come. The devout judge proceeded calmly in the discharge of his office, wishing, if the world ended, to be found in the assiduous fulfilment of his duties. A habitual preparation for sudden death would be itself a sufficient preparation, and the best, for that judgment which some of our erring brethren announce as near.

Are there any scenes or employments in which we should not wish to be surprised by the messenger of death? It is scarce safe to be

*Heb. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8. †Luke ix. 31.

employed in them for any time, however brief, for that brief hour may bring the close of our days, and seal up our history to the time of the end. Let us not indulge in those things, or busy ourselves in those employments, to be surprised in which would be our shame and our ruin at the hour of death, lest we be like "the wicked, driven away in his wickedness." And what can be more tremendous in prospect than this? Let poverty the most grinding afflict me—let me be racked by disease—let helplessness, exile, and shame wait around my death-bed; but let not sin, unrepented and unforgiven sin, be the companion and curse of my dying hours, for then I perish. The trembling Esther, as she went, in peril of her life, to urge her request, exclaimed, "If I perish, I perish," but perished not. The timorous disciples, as they saw the waters tempestuous, and the vessel ready to be filled, exclaimed to their Lord, "Master, we perish;" and he arose and spoke, and the waters were calmed, and the disciples saved. But if sin be my master, cherished, trusted, and idolized, no such peradventure as encouraged Esther remains for me. I perish without an alternative, inevitably, and for ever. No deliverance like that which rescued the Apostles will be wrought for me. For if sin be my master, it is a master that cannot save. And the God of heaven and earth will say to the impenitent sinner as said his servant Peter to the sorcerer Simon, "Thy money,"—thine idol, be it what it may—"*perish with thee.*" Death is on the way, and hell following with it; and if sin rule in us, the ruler and the ruled, the master and the servant, the idol and the idolator, must sink together into endless perdition. Now by lessons, therefore, in the opening leaves of the volume of Providence, that enforce and repeat the admonitions of the volume of Scripture; and now by lessons in Scripture that illustrate and interpret, in their turn, the visitations of Providence; by the mutual and reflected light of inspiration and calamity, the one explaining the other; by "*the rod,*" and the voice of Him "*who hath appointed it,*" as He wields the one and utters the other,—God is instructing us to renounce our sins. He who rules, and who is soon to judge the world, is reiterating over our land his denunciations against sin, his warnings against ruin, and his demands of repentance. Repentance is alike his claim and our duty. Each calamity cries aloud, and this is its message. And from the depths of our own conscience, in our hours of solitude and serious reflection, the summons is re-echoed, "Repent ye." "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

SERMON CCCLXI.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."—John v. 28, 29.

THE Bible is our only source of satisfactory information respecting our condition in another world. Philosophy may throw out some dark hints and incite us to *hope* for immortality. But this is all that she can do. To revelation we are indebted for the only clear light which we possess on this subject.

A more important subject cannot arrest human attention. We find it hard to bear a few years of affliction, or a few hours of pain. With how much solicitude, then, must we inquire respecting our condition in that eternal world, when ages roll on in their unbroken and interminable series? We find a few years of happiness, or a few hours of enjoyment a priceless blessing. How deeply, then, must we feel interested in the possible enjoyments of eternity?

I. Let us, then, examine the instructions of the Bible respecting a future world. All are aware that the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, and the New Testament, for the most part, in the Greek. The Hebrews called the grave *sheol*. The Greeks called it *hades*. The English word *grave*, the Greek word *hades*, and the Hebrew word *sheol*, meaning one and the same thing. When the Hebrews spake of *sheol*, or the Greeks of *hades*, they meant only *the world of the dead—the place of departed spirits*, without any reference to their condition as happy or unhappy.

The New Testament writers call the grave the place of departed spirits—the world of the dead, *hades*. And by this term alone they neither expressed happiness nor misery. The good, when they die, go to *hades*; and the bad, when they die, go to *hades*. In other words, the good and the bad alike die, and go alike to the world of spirits.

Now the sacred writers also teach, that in *hades*, there is a place of rewards and a place of punishment. They teach that the good go to a part of *hades* where they are made happy, and that the bad go to a part of *hades* where they are made miserable; that in *hades*, that is, in the future world, "some awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It was necessary to give some name to these two different parts of *hades*. What name should be given to that part which was the abode of wo? They would of course assign to it some name expressive of that which is loathsome and awful. They naturally looked about them to see what object in this world was most abhorrent to them, and as-

signed the same name to that part of *hades* which was devoted to suffering.

Near Jerusalem there was a deep valley into which all the rubbish and filth of the city was cast. The bodies of dead animals; decayed vegetables; the sweepings of the streets, and all the other filth which must unavoidably be collected in a populous city, were thrown to putrify together. Such a mass of corruption near the city would endanger its health by filling the air with deadly exhalations. In order to obviate this, continual fires were kept, that everything capable of being burnt might be consumed. Here the loathsome worm rioted unceasingly in the putrid carcases of animals, which were daily cast in for his repast. Here the fire was continually burning by day and by night, and dark volumes of smoke were unceasingly rolling up from this awful receptacle of impurity. It was a place full of abominations; and to the Jew, with his peculiar notions of ceremonial uncleanness, it was beyond expression revolting. This valley was called "*Geenna*," the English of which is "Hinnom's vale."

Therefore, this name was affixed to that part of *hades* which was devoted to punishment, and it was called the *geenna* of *hades*. As the worst place which the Jew could conceive of, in this world, was called *geenna*, so he spake of the *geenna* of the future world, just as we now say, such a place is the Sodom of America, or such a man is a very Judas Iscariot.

Thus it is said, "be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him which, *after he hath killed*, hath power to cast into *hell*," *i. e.*, into *geenna*; for *geenna* is the Greek word here used, and not *hades*. Again: "It is better for ye to enter into life maimed, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into hell (*geenna*), into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

The imagery here, is taken from the ceaseless fires and the putrefaction of Hinnom's vale. In all these and many other cases, it is the *geenna* of *hades* which is spoken of. All alike must go down to the mighty empire of the grave. But as the metropolis of Judea, in its pride and its glory, had its receptacle for impurity and all uncleanness; as it had its valley, where the ceaseless flame consumed, and the worm rioted, and the smoke of its fires ever ascended, so shall there be in the world of spirits—in the New Jerusalem, in a still more awful sense, a vale of Hinnom, into which shall be cast all that offend or do iniquity; where the destruction shall be everlasting from the presence of the Lord; where the rioting worm shall never die; where the consuming flame shall never be quenched, where the smoke of torment shall ascend for ever and for ever.

II. There is, in the future world, a place of rewards. It was necessary that some appropriate name should be given to that place—some name that would image to the mind elevation and bliss. What is

there upon which the human eye can fall, so majestic as the Heavens spread out above us? What is there more alluring to the imagination, than to rise from earth, and soar upon untiring wing through the skies? The future world has consequently its heaven of delight, where angels' wings glitter with plumage that the bird of Paradise never rivalled; where music, more melodious than was ever warbled from the sweetest songsters of the forest, is borne upon the fragrant breeze, from harps of gold, and from blest voices. The redeemed of Christ shall spread a wing that never tires in this bright Heaven. The victim of unrepented sin, cast into the Hinnom's vale of the future world, shall be devoured by the undying worm, shall be burned by the quenchless flame, and the smoke of his torment shall ascend not for a few days only, but for ever and ever.

Such is the Scriptural doctrine of the future world. It has its Hell and its Heaven. The one is the abode of the devil and his angels, the other is the capital of creation's monarch,—the abode of Holy angels, and of purified spirits.

III. This world is the world of probation. We are here maturing for hell's dark valley of fire and worms, and all impurity, or for Heaven's mansions and songs. At the judgment, which comes after death, the sentence is to be pronounced which consigns us to the one, or elevates us to the other. Heaven's glories shall never wane; the angel's wing shall never tire; the song of praise shall never cease. And he who goes down to hell's depths, will find that the worm never dies and the fire never shall be quenched. There will be different degrees of remorse in hell and different degrees of elevation in Heaven. But the fiend and the seraph are alike immortal. The image of God's eternity is stamped even upon the devil's soul.

Christian ministers are sometimes accused of trying to terrify sinners to repentance by exhibiting distorted and exaggerated representations of the pains of hell. But to give an exaggerated description of the weight of endless wo, is impossible. The powers of human language have been absolutely exhausted by the pen of inspiration in describing the horrors which await the wicked in the eternal world. Language cannot express more than the sacred writers have expressed. No imagination can conceive imagery more terrific. The hell of Homer and of Virgil is tame indeed compared with the retribution which the Bible reveals as awaiting the impenitent beyond the grave.

When the mind contemplates the lost spirit "scarred with the sword of justice, and wan with despair," dwelling in devouring flames, with the devil and his angels for his associates, and groaning beneath the burden of eternal chains, it feels, at once, that language can describe nothing more fearful—that the imagination cannot penetrate a region of thicker gloom.

Some of you may say that there is no pleasure in hearing such a sermon as this; it is replete with horror. The Christian minister is not commissioned to proclaim *pleasant sermons;* but to warn of judgment,

and to entreat sinners to flee from the coming wrath. If the exhibition of these truths is so painful to our feelings now; if we cannot bear even to *hear God's message* respecting the doom of the finally impenitent, what will be our feelings when these terrors, in their material reality, flash upon our eyes, and we are enduring, in bodily presence, this just and awful doom?

Here you have a true picture of your situation in the future world, unless through Christ you obtain redemption. And into these scenes you are liable any day or any hour to be plunged. Death stands ready at your door, and at the corner of every street; and when you least expect it, his dart may pierce you. Is it then needless to entreat you to awake from sleep, and to prepare to meet your God?

Christian, are you aware of the merited doom from which Christ has rescued you? Oh! what would now be your prospects were it not for a Saviour's love? And are you indeed ransomed from hell? Is the sentence of your condemnation reversed? Can you look with composure upon the lowering storms of eternity, feeling that you are secure from their fury? Happy, happy Christian; the blood of atonement has marked you as redeemed; the image of God is replaced upon your soul; the love of every spirit now winging its heavenly flight is extended to you with fraternal warmth.

Have you a *living* faith? Do you *believe* that you are an heir of Heaven? Then, every day is a day of happiness. In *faith* you have a cure for every human ill. It dispels every cloud. It disarms every affliction.

"For earth hath no sorrow
That heaven cannot heal."

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SERMON CCCLXII.

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DEATH DREADFUL TO THE UNGODLY.

Gather not my soul with sinners.—Psalms xxvi. 9.

There is something in death from which human nature instinctively shrinks with dread and horror. Come in what form it may—come attended with all the alleviating circumstances which sympathy and the assiduities of friendship can impart, it is still armed with terrors which neither reason, fortitude, nor philosophy can dispel. We may speculate upon the nature and the necessity of death, and summon all our energies to meet it with calmness and composure. But when we see the emaciated form, the ghastly countenance, and the dying strife, we feel our courage fail, and shrink from the approaching conflict. It does not reconcile us to our lot that the generations who have preceded us, have been swept away by this invincible foe. The power of death as felt by others, and felt by ourselves, is so entirely different, that we feel the same anguish and dread as though we were its first victims. We cannot familiarize our minds with this event, so as to feel no misgivings or concern when we see it approaching. There is in it something so stern and inexorable, something so repulsive and abhorrent to our nature, that the more we see of its ravages, the more we dread to fall under its power. Nor is this revulsion of feeling confined to rational beings, but it extends to the animal tribes universally. You have heard their moanings and doleful cries when one of their own kind has been struck down in death. They feel, apparently as well as we, that it is the rebuke and curse of God inflicted on account of sin.

But there are circumstances which vastly augment the terrors of death, and render it a scene ten-fold more dismal and frightful than it is naturally or necessarily. It is to these the inspired penman had special reference, when he offered the petition, "Gather not my soul with sinners." In his time, as well as in our own day, death was doing his dreadful work. All classes felt his cold and iron grasp, and withered beneath his stroke. Some, as they passed away, were cheered with the hope of a glorious immortality, while others had fearful forebodings of weeping, lamentation and wo. He was conscious that "no man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and that there is no dis-

charge in this war." He does not pray to be delivered from death, for he knew that it "is appointed unto all men once to die." It was to him "indubitably certain that his energies must be wasted, his countenance changed," and that he must be conversant with

> "The coffin, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave,
> The deep, damp vault, the darkness and the worm."

But this he most earnestly desired, and most fervently prayed might not be true in respect to him, that his "soul should be gathered with sinners." Whatever other circumstances might aggravate the anguish of his dying hour, he felt that the apprehension of such an issue would be intolerable to be borne. He knew he should then need the sustaining grace of God, and the kind assiduities of those who would commend his departing spirit to the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

The text suggests a topic of great practical interest and importance, viz.: *the misery of dying in the company and with the character of sinners.* "Gather not my soul with sinners." It will be my aim to present some considerations which will exhibit this subject in its true and proper light

I. Such a death is cheered with no well-grounded hope of a blessed immortality. Unwearied efforts have been made to prove that "all things come alike to all; that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; to him that sweareth and to him that feareth an oath." Arguments long and labored have been adduced to quiet the fears of those, who tremble at the recompense due to their sins. Sophistry has lent her aid to mystify and misrepresent the truth, and men of reprobate minds have impiously denounced the justice of God in its threatened execution against persevering transgressors. But these efforts have proved utterly powerless to allay the apprehensions of an awakened conscience, or to impart consolation to the despisers of the Gospel in the hour of their extremity. The truth will flash upon the mind in spite of every effort at resistance, that men will "receive according to the deeds done in the body." There is something within us, that responds to the truth of the inspired declaration, "what a man soweth that shall he also reap." "If he sow the wind, he shall reap the whirlwind." We are prone to forget, that there is in the truth a fitness and an adaptation to the nature of things, which no effort or artifice can destroy. The man who arrays himself against it, is like one who fights against the laws of universal nature. We should pity the weakness and the audacity of him who should attempt to defeat the great plan of God in its beneficent and universal operation. We should pronounce it folly and madness, if men should attempt to arrest the springing of vegetation, and the rain from descending, and the sun from giving light and heat. Their impotency would instantly be seen, and the plan of God would roll on regardless of their opposition and rage. But the recompense which is due to an unholy and wicked life will come with the same infallible

certainty, as the laws which govern the natural world accomplish their great design. Men, in their blindness and infatuation, forget that sin and misery are necessarily and indissolubly joined together. This has been a fatal oversight in every age, and it has contributed largely to the perdition of myriads of our race. But it is a needless and an inexcusable oversight, because in addition to the Divine testimony, there are facts continually occurring, which prove that "the wages of sin is death." We know that a dissolute life brings poverty and shame, with the attending evils of remorse and a premature grave. This is in accordance with a great law of Heaven, undeviating and universal in its application. But it is equally certain that a prayerless and an unholy life will result in a miserable and despairing death. The man who spends his Sabbaths in dissipation and sin will find no Sabbath of rest in heaven. He, who has scorned the warnings of the Gospel, and despised a compassionate Saviour, will not share in the glory of the righteous at the great rewarding day. The punishment with which the wicked will be requited is nothing more than the carrying out of the great plan of God, distinctly announced in the season of their probation. God makes no new decree, but simply executes the penalty which he has proclaimed to be the true desert of sin.

What ground of hope, then, can the unpardoned sinner have in death? He may deny, but he cannot disprove, the Divine justice in consigning him to eternal wretchedness and wo. He may strive to comfort himself with the exuberance of Divine mercy. But the mercy of God is discriminating as well as everlasting. It is mercy shown to the penitent, not to incorrigible transgressors. The provisions of the Gospel were made for the very purpose of enabling God to be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But the contemners of Gospel grace have no claim upon the mercy of God. Their souls must be gathered with sinners, and, like Balaam, they must see the "glory of Israel afar off," but have no share in it.

II. The death of sinners is aggravated by the fact that all their friendly alliances are broken up, never more to be renewed. It would be a forlorn and wretched condition to be doomed to spend life solitary and alone, cut off from the society of friends, and from all those kind assiduities which affection prompts. Our most valued earthly comforts spring from that mutual regard, and delightful interchange of thought and feeling, which we are permitted to enjoy. Life would scarcely be worth possessing, if we were obliged to press on our rugged way with none to sympathize in our sorrows, or to share our joys. But this is one of the appalling aspects in the death of sinners. Up to this period, they may have enjoyed whatever can render life attractive and desirable. They may have had a circle of endeared friends, and a rich profusion of earthly blessings. They may have been conversant with all the refinements and elegances of genteel life. Their wants may have been anticipated, and all their wishes fully gratified. They may have swayed sceptres, and dwelt in palaces, and enjoyed an uninterrupted

tide of worldly prosperity. But when death comes and marks them as his victims, how sad and dreadful the change! They have no power to arrest his approach, or to turn aside the fatal stroke. They are hurried away regardless of prayers and tears, and the lamentations of bereaved friends, and ushered into those solemn scenes where their worst fears will be more than realized. And then, the anguish of separation is greatly augmented by the fact that it must be eternal, or if they meet their impenitent friends again, it will be in circumstances where they will heap upon each other bitter reproaches and aggravate each other's misery.

There is nothing in the friendships of the wicked in this world that will render their renewal in eternity a thing at all to be desired. They may have been strongly attached, but their influence has been mutually corrupting, and strengthened each other in rebellion and sin. They may have shared together the bounties of Providence, but they have never excited each other to a grateful acknowledgment of the profusion of their blessings. They have done nothing to promote each other's salvation; nothing to commend religion to each other's serious regard; but alas, how much to prevent those heavenly influences which might have issued in each other's conversion and salvation. They have talked of Christ and his cross, of heaven and its reward, of hell and its torments, but never in a way to aid each other in procuring a crown of life. And what must be the meeting of such friends in eternity, but one of mutual crimination, rage and despair? You encouraged me, says one, by solicitation and example, to forsake the sanctuary and to spend my Sabbaths in folly and sin; and as a consequence, I am banished from a Sabbath of eternal rest. You, says another, scoffed at religion and enticed me along, till iniquity has proved my ruin. Had it not been for you, says a third, I should have embraced the Saviour and been happy in his kingdom. On the very point of choosing him as my portion, you enticed me back to the world, and induced me to grieve the Holy Spirit to a final departure. It was your example, says a fourth, that encouraged me to live without prayer, and to defer repentance till death closed my probation and shut me up in this prison of despair. In these and similar strains will the wicked reproach each other for the sorrow and the anguish they feel. Their present intimacy and friendship will serve only to enhance the misery of their future association. In proportion as they have corrupted each other on earth, they will torment each other in hell. If there is anything that can fill a benevolent heart with sadness and pain, it is a spectacle so common of a company of sinners full of merriment and glee, pressing their way down to the chambers of death. In a little time, how changed will be the scene! How different the estimate of the enticing and the absorbing things of earth! How different will salvation and perdition appear! How different the object for which life was given; how different the madness and the guilt of rejecting an atoning Saviour! But of all the miserable groups that will sink to perdition, I have often thought that of the family group will be the most wretched. An entire

family in hell, parents and children, brothers and sisters; what a spectacle to contemplate! A family lost beyond the possibility of redemption! A family spending eternal ages in weeping, and wailing and wo:

"Reaping the bitter harvest which their sins have sown."

Impenitent parents, have you seriously thought of the probability of such an issue? Have you reflected that, persisting in your present course, you must perish, and that your children, influenced by your example, will probably perish with you? O, if there is any prayer that parents should offer with an agony of desire, it is this, gather not our souls with sinners. The misery of Dives was augmented by the apprehension, that his five brethren would come to that place of torment. It was not benevolence that led him to desire Abraham to send a messenger from the eternal world to warn them of their danger. It was the dread of meeting them in hell. He had probably done much to corrupt, and to strengthen them in rebellion against God, and he knew they would curse him for the agonies they would suffer.

III. In the death of sinners, the dreadful despotism of sin becomes universal and eternal. This life is rendered comfortable by the restraints which are imposed on the bad passions of the human heart, and by all those purifying and ameliorating influences which emanate from the Gospel. We are protected from the outbreaking of depravity by the strong arm of law, and by the infliction of severe penalties upon flagrant offenders. But we see enough of the ravages of sin to judge of the terrible consequences, if it were permitted to rage on unchecked. Let any community be under the full dominion of unrestrained passion, let pride stalk abroad in its insolence, and avarice have full scope for its grinding oppression, let envy corrode, and malice wreak its vengeance upon its victims, let resentment pour forth its bitter curses and trample and triumph over innocence, and who would not flee from that place as Lot fled from Sodom? It would be a spot dreadful to behold and intolerable to dwell in. And yet, it is nothing but the prevalence and the despotism of sin that renders it so execrable and abominable. What, then, must that world be, where all the wicked shall be congregated, and be permitted to act out their depravity in full maturity without restraint! You have all seen men, whose loathsome wickedness sent a thrill of horror through your souls. To be associated with them a month or a week would fill you with indescribable misery. But their degradation and wretchedness is owing wholly to the predominance and the despotism of sin. Let men laugh at the imagery by which the torments of the lost are shadowed forth, if they will; let them deride the burning lake and the undying worm; there is still enough in the fury of passion and the despotism of sin to render any place where the wicked are thrown together a place of insufferable misery. In view of what we now see, we can easily depict what will be, when all mo-

tives to the practice of virtue shall cease, and the restraints of grace shall be removed, and the wicked shall exhibit their full character without disguise. Whatever of hatred or malignity they possess will be acted out in defiance of God and regardless of the misery they produce. O what a world will that be, where every soul is filled with fury and passion, where all are hateful and hating one another; eager to torment their associates, and in return tormented by them, for ever dying and yet never dead! If this will not constitute a hell, describe one if you can. Grant, if you choose, that literal fire is not a part of the punishment of the wicked. It is not necessary it should be, to render perdition a scene of universal and eternal wailing. There are those who seem to feel that they have subverted the orthodox faith in respect to the retributive justice of God, if they can show that the threatenings of the Bible are set forth in figurative language. But their efforts amount to nothing, unless they can prove that there is nothing in the future condition of the impenitent which is shadowed forth by the terrific imagery of the inspired pages. The grand design of the sacred writers is to fasten the conviction on our minds, that misery is the certain recompense of a depraved and ungodly life. It matters but little as to the mode of its infliction, if the reality is fixed and certain. It is amazing to what shifts men will resort to relieve themselves from the pressure of an unwelcome truth. Let them prove, if they can, that sin, when it is finished, does not bring death. Let them prove that wicked passions cherished in this life will not torment their possessors in the life to come. Let them prove, that the way of transgressors, which is seen to be hard here, will not be terribly more so hereafter. Till these and similar things are proved, they have not advanced one step in proving that perdition is a fiction, and that no wrath is in store for the workers of iniquity.

But there is still another aspect in which this point should be viewed, that furnishes a complete refutation of that miserable sophistry, which has done so much to delude and destroy souls. The threatenings of the Bible, it is said, are in figurative language. But is not the happiness of the righteous set forth in figurative language also? And yet, whoever dreamed of denying the reality of heaven on this account? Who doubts there is a heaven, because it is represented as a vast city, whose foundations are jasper, and whose walls are garnished with all manner of precious stones? Who feels less interest to secure an inheritance there, because the streets of the city are represented as of pure gold, and every part of it resplendent with unfading glory? The object of this representation is perfectly understood. It is intended to convey to our minds a vivid impression of the unspeakable happiness and glory of heaven. As such, we receive it, and in the same manner, according to every principle of fair interpretation, we are bound to interpret the imagery, which shadows forth the misery of the lost.

IV. Another consideration which spreads a deeper gloom over the death of sinners, is the power of an awakened conscience. Impenitent

men labor hard, and are often successful in this life, in quieting the reproofs of this inward monitor. They enjoy facilities for this purpose, of which they will be deprived at death. The world is engrossing and absorbing, and in its various pursuits of business and pleasure, they are able, to a great extent, to keep out of sight and out of mind, the scenes which eternity will disclose. The eyes of their understanding are darkened, and unbelief is as a thick veil through which they see but dimly, spiritual objects. But at death this veil is torn away, and God and heaven and hell are contemplated as present, living realities. There are no intervening objects to obstruct the vision, or to divert the attention from the unchanging destiny which awaits the soul. Things will then appear as they are. The law of God will be seen to be holy, sin will appear exceeding sinful, and the characters of men will be unveiled and be exhibited in the blazing light of truth. In these circumstances, when men have nothing but their sins and their recompense to occupy their minds; when business and pleasure have passed for ever away, when everything conspires to concentrate thought upon the actions of a mis-spent life, conscience will have full scope to do her dreaded and dreadful work. Men have often exclaimed in the review of a dissolute, ungodly life, *O the insufferable pangs of an accusing, guilty conscience!* An eminent statesman, who died a few years since, furnished in his last hours, an affecting illustration of the power of an awakened conscience. He had led a gay and thoughtless life, and his highest ambition was to be esteemed a man of genius and honor, true to his friends and a cordial hater of his enemies. At length, he was brought to a sick and dying bed. A clergyman visited him in the hope that he might be induced, at the eleventh hour, to flee to Christ for pardon and salvation. He questioned him in relation to his feelings; but his only reply was, in tones of agony, *remorse, remorse.* And when his voice was silenced and his limbs were stiffening he made another effort to express the hopelessness of his misery by motioning for a card, and tracing, with his hand, quivering in death, the same significant word, *remorse, remorse.*

> "So withers the mind remorse hath riven,
> Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven,
> Darkness above, despair beneath,
> Around it flame, within it death."

But if conscience possesses such blasting power in this world, if its partial influence fills the soul with such bitterness and anguish, what must it be, when it expends its entire fury upon the soul without mitigation and without end! It was this, in connection with other things, that prompted the petition, "gather not my soul with sinners." There is this peculiarity in regard to the pains inflicted by an accusing conscience. They are pains from which we cannot escape. They are like a burning fire in our bosoms, and the more we strive to quench it, the more it rages. It is this idea that Milton, in his Paradise Lost, so vividly presents when speaking of the mournful strains in which the arch apostate bewailed his wretched state.

"Farewell happy fields
Where joy for ever dwells. Hail horrors,
Hail infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor—me, miserable,
Whither shall I fly? Which way I fly is hell.
Myself am hell."

It is this that gives the climax to the wretchedness of the dying sinner. He has the elements of misery in his own bosom. It is there the fires are kindled which will rage on with unmitigated fury for ever. Who will not join in the prayer, "gather not my soul with sinners?"

I shall add but one consideration more. In the death of sinners, probation closes, and the rich provisions of the Gospel are henceforth unavailing. Up to this period, the voice of mercy is heard calling upon prodigals to return, and promising them forgiveness through the blood of the atonement. There are no stains too deep and dark to be cleansed by a timely application to a merciful and Almighty Redeemer. Thousands, whose lives have been steeped in guilt, and whose feet have been swift to shed blood, have found free forgiveness in Christ. But the Gospel is confined in its offers and in its pardoning efficacy to the season of man's probation. It has no power to subjugate the passions and renew us unto holiness after the spirit shall return to God who gave it. The character we bear with us into eternity will remain unchanged through all its revolving ages. "He that is unjust will be unjust still, and he which is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is righteous will be righteous still, and he that is holy will be holy still." It is this view, which invests the present life with such unspeakable and overwhelming interest. The line once passed that separates time from eternity, and there "remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." But who can contemplate an eternal existence of sinning and suffering, and not feel an agonizing solicitude to escape a doom so dreadful! Think, fellow sinners, of the accumulated horrors which cluster around an immortal being, who finds himself exposed without hope and without relief to the raging of an eternal tempest. The waves of sorrow roll over his soul,

"And in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to devour him, opens wide,
To which the hell he suffers seems a heaven."

And *can* this be eternal? Is there no cessation to his insupportable woes? Is there no intimation of mercy to lighten his despair? Will not a compassionate Saviour once more say, "come unto me ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" O no. The last accents of mercy to him have died away for ever. The Spirit has made his last call. The sabbath has dawned for the last time, and all the promises of mercy are made, as to him, in vain. Judge ye, if there is not ground for the prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners." To die in any circumstances is a solemn and momentous event. But to

die in the company and with the character of sinners is the climax of wretchedness, and ensures the full realization of all that is terrific in the wrath of God. How many death-bed scenes confirm the truth of this remark. I will mention one, the particulars of which have been made public, and they may be relied on as authentic. Some time since, a man sent for a clergyman under circumstances that rendered his recovery hopeless. He was aware of his danger, and terribly alarmed for the safety of his immortal soul. The minister saw, at a glance, that there was no time to lose, and directed him to the Lord Jesus Christ as willing and able to save to the uttermost. Suddenly, and with emphasis, he said, "I am burdened, I am burdened. I must unbosom myself, I must confess my sin." He mentioned one sin of peculiar guilt, and cried out, "that's the load that weighs upon my conscience." The minister entreated him to confess his sins to God, and seek through the blood of the Saviour, forgiveness. He did cry, Lord Jesus, have mercy, but there was no cessation of his tormenting fears. At length, summoning his last energies, he threw off the clothes from the bed, and said to the minister at his side, "O, sir, that's a mighty idea, that's a mighty idea, to go and throw one's self down before God to see what is to be done with us. Yes, sir, it's to see what is to be done with us." He tossed himself a little longer, screamed for mercy, though no mercy came, wept and groaned and died.

You shudder at the thought that such an end should be yours. It may not be, in all its circumstances of aggravation and anguish. And yet, a prayerless and an impenitent life *is certain* to issue in a hopeless and a despairing death. Here then, fellow sinner, is the point of chief interest and concern to you, to secure, by an immediate and cordial reception of the Gospel, the presence of Him, who can cheer your dying hour, and bid you welcome to the society and the songs of heaven. Persisting in impenitence, your soul will be gathered with sinners, and their doom will be yours. Flee, then, to the glorious refuge provided. Be not delayed by the stupidity and the worldliness of those around you. Listen not to the suggestions of the adversary. Trust not to the fatal delusion of future repentance. Indulge not the vain hope that God's mercy is too great to permit you to perish. Say not that perdition is too dreadful to be a reality. Thousands have comforted themselves in this delusion, till hope expired, and they found themselves wailing in despair. Your only hope is, in repairing to the cross, and making Christ your Saviour and your friend. Doing this, your soul shall not be gathered with sinners, but amidst the agonies of dissolving nature you shall triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory." May this be your end and mine, and to the riches of grace, will we ascribe all the praise now and for ever.

SERMON CCCLXIII.

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THE DIVINE METHOD

OF RAISING CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."—1 Cor. xvi. 2.

Love gives a cup of cold water to a disciple. Love visits the needy and the afflicted. Love goes forth to seek and save the lost. In a distant country, under the burning sun, amid privations, many and great, love cheers the weary, drooping stranger, while he pities, and instructs, and guides the returning wanderer. So God sent his Son into the world to save sinners. So the Son came, saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." To build the tabernacle, the willing-hearted brought enough, and more than enough. Said the man after God's own heart, "Because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, prepared with all my might three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand talents of silver. Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

Love was the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia. Then, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. They were willing of themselves beyond their power. They prayed the Apostles with much entreaty to receive the gift. They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then were they ready to do his will in every good work. Love inspires the grateful recollection of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. We are not our own, but are bought with a price; and, in the exercise of love, we devote to him that loved and bought us, all that we are and have, and all that we can do, to carry into effect his designs of mercy to perishing men, and we ask, each one for himself,

"What can I do for Him that died,
To save my wretched soul?"

Knowing, as we do, the languishing state of the missionary enterprise, in all its departments, we shall rejoice to find *the Divine Method of raising all the funds we need.*

Let us examine this DIVINE METHOD.

1. It is *to contribute frequently and statedly.* Upon the first day of the week. This is frequently, for it is once in seven days. Nor shall we think that God calls too frequently, if he calls once a week, to make some appropriate acknowledgment of his right, by giving a portion of what he gives us, to carry on his peculiar work in the world, and to save the perishing; to save them, not from starvation, but from perdition. Can once a week be too frequently to lay by in store to feed the hungry and clothe the naked? Was it not ordered in the Churches of Galatia, as well as in the Church of Corinth, that the same rule should be observed? And can we hesitate for a moment to adopt it in regard to the evangelizing of the world? Once a week—can this be too often to make a pecuniary contribution to send the word of life, or the messenger of mercy, announcing life to those who are dead in sins? Were our souls where theirs are, should we think once a week too often to be thought of, and prayed for, and labored for, that we might live? Relief must be had. God has ordered it to be given by us, and given on the first day of the week. *Frequently*, so that we may never forget it.

Statedly also. Upon the first day of the week. What day could be more appropriate? The Redeemer's birth-day. As it is said, "This day have I begotten thee." The day of the Church's foundation: for, on the first day of the week, the stone, which the builders rejected, became the head of the corner. What precious associations! A rising Saviour! A Church founded! Now, on the same day, we lay by in store that which may honor the Saviour, add lively stones to the building, send hope to the benighted world. It must be good also to begin the week with this labor of love. Let God have the first fruits of all our time; let the noble object of saving lost men, as co-workers with God, pre-occupy our thoughts and our plans, give tone to our spirit, and direction to all our movements. To commence the week in this manner assimilates earth to heaven, the employments of Christians to the employments of angels. The sanctity and the blessedness of the Sabbath are thus spread over all our time and all the work of our hands. Thus frequently and statedly the *Divine Method* requires to lay by in store.

2. It is *to contribute universally.* "Every one of you." Is it a *duty* to contribute frequently and statedly for evangelizing the world? Whose duty is it? The duty of every Christian. Is it a *privilege?* Whose privilege? Does our Lord demand the service of every one? Does he not, at the same time, allow every one the privilege? Who is it, then, among all his friends, that is to be exempt from the duty?

Who that is to be deprived of the privilege? Not one. Due allegiance is expected of all, and due favor is shown to all. It is ordained that *every* one shall lay by him in store. How suitable and how beautiful is this arrangement! Here the whole Church of Christ, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the male and the female, appear before him on the first day of the week. Nor does any one appear empty. Every one lays by him in store an offering, as an acknowledgment of obligation and thanksgiving. This being done frequently and statedly, and on that day of consecration and blessing, it is suited to produce the most happy results. Here all hearts beat in unison, before the face of the Lord. This act is done by every one in his own dwelling, under the eye of the Lord, who seeth not as man seeth, but looketh upon the heart. From a principle of obedience and love every redeemed sinner gives an offering to the Lord. While this method cherishes the best feelings towards God our Saviour, and towards his people and cause, it does, at the same time, lie as the basis of all that is needful by way of contribution.

For a moment think of the power which the mighty Saviour can call into action on this principle. Suppose a church of two hundred and fifty members. Let every one be poor, and every one lay by only the widow's two mites, which make a farthing. One cent a week from two hundred and fifty Christians will amount, in a year, to at least one hundred and twenty-five dollars! Is not the DIVINE METHOD one of great power? How vast the sum from a million of Christians! —from a million of poor Christians! Not less than five hundred thousand dollars!

But this is by no means the divine standard of contribution. It is only the frequency and universality that we have yet considered. And far be it from us to intimate that the rich are to contribute no more than the poor. Such is by no means the DIVINE METHOD.

3. It is *to contribute in due proportion.* "*As God hath prospered him.*" It is supposed that every Christian is engaged in business. It is needful, while in this world, that every one should have some honest and laudable mode of acquiring property, both to supply personal and domestic wants, and afford a surplus for the needy. Believers were generally poor in Apostolic times, and obtained the means of their support by their daily labor. At the end of the week, their work being done, they could be ready to observe the Divine Providence in regard to them, and to know how they had been prospered in their business. And this was the rule of proportion for their contribution. They might lay by in store a certain per cent., five, ten, twenty, or any other proportion, just as they were able, or as their love prompted them to do, either more or less. If, at any time, they had received more than common, then their proportion would be the same, while the amount would be greater. And so, if they had received less. This would operate equally upon all the members; for the rich would give abundance

from their abundant income, and the poor would give a little, just in the same proportion.

The Apostle does not say, however, how much each man should give, only that it should be proportionate to each one's prosperity. Every one is able to exercise his own judgment. God wishes not that we should feel as tributaries, but as friends and children; that he is Lord of all, the Father of mercies, and the Saviour of the lost; that we should understand the work he is engaged in, and that we are allowed and expected to co-operate in it. And, that our views may be enlarged and our affections engaged, he allows us the unspeakable privilege of considering his kingdom as our kingdom, his work as our work, his glory as our glory, and the happiness and glory of all that is achieved and done, as his joy, in which we are permitted to share. With such a work before us, and such results as our ultimate reward and portion, he calls us to take part in the work, with the assurance that every one shall receive a reward according to his own labor. With our eye fixed on the future joy, he allows us to deny ourselves, to labor, to make sacrifices, and bear his cross, just in proportion to our faith and love; all proceeding spontaneously from our ardent affection for him, and his cause, and the souls of men. In this blessed enterprise, he lays out before us, not only this world, which is the field in which he works and employs us, but heaven and hell, with their eternal realities. Heaven, the dwelling of all that become holy and happy, on the one hand; and hell, with the wicked and the lost, on the other, God reveals to us as the final destination of every soul of man. It is not, then, a mere estimate of our doing a certain amount of labor, or giving a certain amount of contribution, or bearing a certain weight of sorrow and affliction, that is to regulate our action, or our suffering; but it is the worth of the soul, the bliss of heaven, the pains of hell, the example of God, angels and good men, that are to be always before us. Such are the themes of thought, the expanding, ennobling, and invigorating realities, which are to move us. And, with these in view, God allows us to judge and determine how great shall be the amount that we will consecrate to this noble, angelic, godlike enterprise. The purpose and the act are to be our own, in the sight of God, with the glory and joy that are set before us.

Such is the DIVINE METHOD.

4. It is *such as requires order and care.* "Let every one of you lay by him in store." Laborers have store-houses. In them they preserve the fruits of their labor. They have also a place for their money; their iron chest or some other place of safety. This is their treasury. In this they deposit the results of their industry and frugality. For what? For the double purpose of order and safe-keeping. On this place of deposit, how much thought may be expended! It is the store, perhaps, laid up for a day of trouble, or for the helplessness of old age, or as an inheritance for children. In view of this store, one may say to his soul, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Another

may calculate how much he may gain by the provident use of this store; or he may pride himself on the power he can exert with his wealth. Others may look towards their little store with an anxious eye, unable to tell how their wants shall be supplied amid the vicissitudes of an uncertain hereafter.

But where is the man who keeps a treasury for God? I mean a place of deposit, in which he may lay up in store, as God has prospered him, his contribution for the relief of the needy, especially the needy soul. It would be no great stretch of the imagination to suppose that a pious mind would find as much pleasure in thinking of the Lord's treasury as of his own. It is the testimonial of his heavenly Father's bounty. Every thought of it calls forth a new emotion of love, with a strong desire to do good to the needy. In this treasury the money is safe, and it is ready. This was one design of the Apostle in ordering this deposit—"that there be no gatherings when I come." He was making collections in Asia and Europe, among the churches of the Gentiles, to relieve the poor saints at Jerusalem. He was the general agent in this concern. As he was passing from one church to another to promote their spiritual interests, he was willing to take charge of their collections, and be the bearer of them for the relief of the poor. But he did not wish to do what they could do themselves. Nor did he wish to be diverted or detained from his great work while their collections were being made. If they would follow his directions, all would be ready. He would receive their bounty, and rejoice with them in their readiness and liberality. Then God would be pleased with their cheerfulness, and honored by the abundance of their contribution and their joy. So in all cases of charitable liberality, if the DIVINE METHOD were followed, how pleasant, how delightful would be the aspect of the Church! Every member laying by him in store upon the first day of the week, as God had prospered him, what an abundance would there be for every want! How promptly, how cheerfully, how satisfactorily would every want be met! Then would there be no complaint of hard times; for every one's bounty would be ready. Then would there be no complaint of too many calls; for on every Lord's day the store would be replenished. Let there be a call on one Lord's day for the Bible Society; on another, for the Tract Society; on a third, for the Foreign Missionary Society; on a fourth, for the Home Missionary Society; on a fifth, for the Education Society; on a sixth, for the Sabbath School Society; and so on, till all the Societies, which deserve our aid, have called—and then—what? *Let them call again;* for again we shall be ready. Note, however, that the Apostle does not direct these supplies to be laid by in the house of God on the first day of the week; but every one in his own house. Then, at the call of the Lord, there may be brought forth, from every one's store, whatever has been laid by, or as much as may be needful and proper for that object.

LET THESE DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS BE APPLIED.

1. *Personal responsibility is an essential element of the* DIVINE METHOD.

Our Lord does not intend that the individual shall be lost in the mass. His eye is upon the treasury. He observes every offering. The rich may cast in much. But his eye is upon every one. He orders every one of us, on the first day of the week, to lay by in store as he has prospered us. And he looks as carefully at the gift of the poor as at the gift of the rich. He kindly takes notice of the love, the hard labor, the self-denial of a poor disciple who presents a small oblation. The turtle-dove, the young pigeon, the two mites, the hard-earned shilling, given cheerfully, joyfully, with a heart overflowing with faith and love, attracts the notice of the "High and Lofty One." But if there be among his professed followers, one, or two, or any other number, who present no oblation, how do you think the Omniscient views them? They have no treasury for God. They lay by nothing in store. They have no present for him in their hand, nor in their house. He sees nothing in all they possess designed for him, unless connected with some self-interest. Do you think that Christ is pleased with such? They may think, indeed, that the church to which they belong does much; and they may think that they shall pass along with the church, as being bountiful. But what theology, what logic is this? The Church is bountiful; therefore, every member is bountiful! Do such expect to die with the mass, to be judged with the mass, to be admitted into heaven with the mass? Is it not written that, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God?" And does not the same authority order that "upon the first day of the week, every one shall lay by him in store as God hath prospered him?" As certainly as every member of the Church is an individual being, just so certainly is every one ordered to lay by in store as God hath prospered him.

2. *The Divine Method is feasible.*—In regard to many plans there is doubt whether they will operate well in practice, because it may be difficult to carry them out. But there is no difficulty in regard to this; for only one person is concerned in carrying it out. He is not dependent on any one but himself. None need inquire whether the whole church, or any considerable number, or even any other one, will do it. It is a personal matter. Nor can any one say he is not able; for it is only to lay by in store as God has prospered you. It is the simplest of all methods, and can be easily carried into effect by every one that desires to do it. Let there be but a willing mind, and you will do as did the contributors to build the tabernacle or the temple; or, as did the Gentile churches to relieve the poor saints at Jerusalem. A willing mind makes a cheerful giver, and God loveth a cheerful giver.

3. *The Divine Method is for the best interest of the Church.*—Let

every member try it at once. It will give new views to many on this most practical subject. It will greatly enlarge the mind. It will put every one on a desire to arrange his affairs with system. It will tend to inspire every one with energy. It will dilate the heart with joy. It will open a new source of enjoyment. And it will give an unwonted impulse to all religious feeling and action, and to the common business of life; for, as you adopt this *Divine Method* you will feel more than ever before that you live for God, for the Church, for the benefit of souls, and for a vast eternity. Your meditations, your prayers, your plans, your whole manner of life will be improved. You will at once become more like Christ in your regard to the great work of evangelizing the world; and, in many important respects, the aspect of the world, of time and eternity, will be changed. You will aim at higher, nobler, more enduring, and more glorious objects, for you will more readily understand the mind of Christ, and more justly estimate the superlative excellence of his kingdom and glory.

4. *The Divine Method carried out will furnish abundant supplies.*—If one cent a week from a million will furnish five hundred thousand dollars, as the contribution of the poor, what an abundant supply will be furnished when the more able and the rich shall lay by in store as God has prospered them! Fifty cents are but the tenth part of five dollars. If every one should adopt Jacob's vow, what an income would annually flow into the Lord's treasury! For every ten dollars one; for every hundred dollars ten: for every thousand a hundred! But we are not to suppose that the more able will be content to give no larger proportion than the poor. Where much is forgiven, the love will be much. Where the Lord bestows bountifully, he expects to reap bountifully. And the pious soul, that receives much from the Lord, delights to consecrate much to him in return. There can, therefore, be no doubt of abundant supplies, if the *Divine Method* be carried out.

5. *The Divine Method affords a test of Christian love.*—In some parts of the world a man becomes a Christian at the risk of his life. So it was generally during the first three hundred years after the Christian era. And thus were verified the words of Christ to his disciples: Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. He added, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life for my sake, shall find it." But what is the test of Love to Christ, at this time, and in this land? It is not the name of Christ. So many are called Christians, that the name is far from being a term of reproach. It requires no self-denial, no sacrifice, no cross, to assume the Christian name, at this time, and in this country. What then is a test of Christian love? Is it orthodox doctrine? Is it moral duty or religious form? Is it penance or abstinence? Is it frequent or long continued exercises of prayer, preaching, or effort to persuade sinners to become such sort of Christians as everywhere abounds? None of these, nor all of them together; for all these may be where there is nothing of the

peculiarities of that love which would die for Christ. *But here is a test of Christian love.* When one hears the command of Christ, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and says, "Lord, here am I, send me," and goes forth. When another perceives that he is not qualified to go, but is willing to do as much at home, and deny himself as much, and suffer as much to encourage and sustain him that goes. This is Christian love; and this is precisely what is needed in this country at this time. For the sake of illustration, suppose that you were to devote yourself and your all to the missionary cause, just as the most devoted missionary of whom you ever heard, and labor at home instead of going abroad. You live in as good a house, and wear as good apparel, and spread as good a table, and regulate all your expenses, and improve all your time, and train your family just as you think it becomes your brother, the missionary, to do; at the same time you deny yourself as much, and do all in your power as much to promote the cause, as you expect him to do. In all these things you keep the Lord Jesus Christ in view, and seek to please him, and imitate his example, and bear his cross, and seek his kingdom. You also, as a true yoke-fellow, work shoulder to shoulder with them who toil abroad; pray as they pray, and feel as they feel, and hope as they hope. Tell me now, is not this Christian love? Tell me again, does not the *Divine Method* lead to this very course? Is it not then a test of Christian love? Is not this the very thing that is needed at this time and in this country? It is not a bloody test, to be sure; but is it not as surely a test? Admit, indeed, if it be demanded, that all this might be without love to Christ. We contend, too, that a man might "give his body to be burned" without charity; but this alters not the nature of the test. It still stands good for this purpose; and by this must Christian love, at this day, and in this land, be tried.

6. Finally. *Shall the Divine Method be adopted and pursued?*—For one, I answer in the affirmative. I will not preach to others what I will not do myself. I have weighed this matter; and I beg you to allow me to say, without being thought ostentatious, that I have practised this method, substantially, for about thirty years. I do not say that I have *literally* laid by on the first day of the week, as God has prospered me; but that I have done the same as to the general amount. I do not say that I have loved Christ, or his cause, or the souls of men, or denied myself and suffered so much as I might have done. But I do say that I have, during these years, devoted a certain proportion, a tenth at least, of all that God has given me, to his treasury. Nor would I have said this publicly, were it not that consistency seemed to require it, for I wish to bear testimony that the *Divine Method* is good. It impresses upon the Christian a *sense of personal responsibility; it is feasible; it is good to the one who follows it; it enables one to do his part in contributing to evangelize the world; it is a test of Christian love.* And now, I must urge every one to adopt and pursue this method. The single fact that it is of God, is sufficient to recommend it to every one

that loves God. Then the fact that it is called for at the present time to sustain and carry forward the missionary enterprise, should recommend it to every one who loves Christ and the souls of men. It proposes that something be done; that it be done now; that every Christian should do it, and continue to do it. It is no oppressive method; but one of equality. It is no partial method; but one to be adopted by every Christian. It is no fitful method; but one to be pursued steadily, as based on Christian principle. It is no unsuitable method; but one adapted to the exigency of the times, and adequate to all the demands of charity. It is no novel invention; but it has stood the test of ages. Nor is it just now discovered; for it is written in the ancient records. The author of "The Great Commission" urges it as appropriate to the present wants of the world, as well as of divine authority. We expect of our missionaries as much at least as this *Divine Method* requires. And why should not every one of us do as they do, and bring all our love, and self-denial, and practical energy to bear upon this heavenly enterprise? "Who then is willing, this day, to consecrate his services to the Lord," and to a perishing world? "His God be with him, and make him a blessing to thousands of millions." Amen.

SERMON CCCLXIV.

BY REV. JOHN M. WHITON,

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The Salvation of the Gospel great, and not to be neglected with impunity.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—HEB. II., PART OF 3d.

THAT thousands who have the offer of salvation by Christ, do neglect it, and neglect it shamefully, is too plain to need proof. By neglecting prayer—leaving the Bible unstudied—desecrating the Sabbath—absenting themselves from Christian assemblies, or hearing the truth with utter indifference—slighting divine ordinances—preferring to think, read, or talk of anything rather than Christ, they neglect this salvation. In so doing, they live as Satan would have them; he wishes them to do nothing worse, for Christ neglected is practically the same as Christ rejected. Better neglect anything else. Irreligion, though less hurtful to present interest or reputation, will be found, in the end, as fatal to the soul as open immorality.

The topics presented in the text are, *the greatness of this salvation*—and *the fallacy of the neglecter's hope of escape.*

1. A work is thought to be great, in proportion to the greatness of the *preparations for its accomplishment.* When, in passing by a field, you see a great multitude of laborers, with all sorts of implements, you infer that some great piece of work is in hand. On visiting a large commercial city, the ships, wharves and stores, apprise you that an extensive trade is intended. The sight of a large army with all sorts of warlike *materiel*, would lead you to the conclusion that some great conquest was meditated. Think, now, of the vastness of God's preparations for the salvation of men. A Saviour, early promised—sacrifices appointed—religious worship enjoined—angels sent from heaven with messages to men—prophets raised up to preach and foretell—a Sabbath instituted—the holy Scriptures written—the Son of God not spared from a painful death—Gospel ordinances appointed—ministers sent forth to call men to repentance—the Spirit poured from on high: and then say, do not the preparations indicate the greatness of that salvation which is their sole object?

2. We infer the magnitude of a work *from the dignity of the chief*

agent. Why, for the highest places of magistracy, or embassies to foreign nations, do men propose those, supposed to possess first rate qualifications? Because the trust reposed is great; the work to be done, important. For the work of redemption, neither man nor angel was competent; the undertaking of it on the part of Christ, was as if he had said, It can be trusted to no hand but my own; I myself will become the chief agent; "lo, I come;" no other than a divine person can expiate sin, magnify the law, subdue the heart of the sinner, and render forgiveness consistent with justice. Such is the dignity of the Saviour, God's *own* Son, that it is the glory of our world that he lived in it, of our nature that he assumed it. How great the work that required for its accomplishment the strength of an Almighty Arm, the attributes of an Infinite Mind!

3. *The multitude of subordinate agents* is another token of the greatness of an enterprise. Solomon built the temple—but not without the instrumentality of many thousands of inferior agents, whose labors were put in requisition year after year. What a vast amount of services! How costly the edifice! Behold in redemption a greater than Solomon here. Under Christ, the Superior Agent, what countless multitudes of subordinates have been employed in unbroken succession, from age to age. What an army of Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs! How many myriads of ministers called of God to preach! What numbers employed in writing, translating, printing and circulating the Bible and other books of piety! How many millions have subserved the great cause as teachers, in families and Sabbath schools; or aided it by their prayers and contributions! The printers who publish Christian books, the laborers who build our churches, yea, the very sailors who convey the missionary to his far distant destination—all are co-operators. Perhaps they mean not so; their object may be anything rather than the salvation of souls; still they are necessary, though involuntary, builders of the spiritual temple. Would such a multitude of hands be employed, were the work not great?

4. A fourth mark of greatness is found in the *importance of the object* to be accomplished. The pyramids of Egypt, though structures of prodigious magnitude and cost, are, in the respect just mentioned, unimportant and almost worthless. What good have they done the world? unless, indeed, to furnish a tomb for the bodies of a few kings, which might just as well have dissolved into their original elements in a common grave. What a misapplication and waste of time and treasure! But a canal, facilitating communication, and creating a profitable commerce between distant regions; a steam communication between Europe and America, bringing remote quarters of the world into near neighborhood; are great enterprises, on account of their permanently and extensively beneficial results. While we yield to these and similar works, all the tribute they can justly claim, yet how insignificant are all earthly and temporal objects compared with the salvation

of a soul—an undying soul! of millions of such souls—souls that will think, and act, and feel for ever! as all the souls who ever thought and felt, are, in some unknown part of God's universe, thinking and feeling beings still. To open the blind eyes—to unstop the deaf ears—to extirpate the bad passions of depraved nature—to lead men in the path of peace—to bring succor to the perishing, pardon to the guilty, salvation to the wretched and miserable, an eternal heaven to those who deserve the deepest hell—this is what the Gospel aims at. How transcendent the object, how great the salvation!

5. An enterprise is stamped with greatness *in proportion to the obstacles removed, and the difficulties overcome.* The celebrated road of Napoleon, from France through Switzerland into Italy, carried over the Simplon, one of the Alps, leads the traveller up steep acclivities, on the verge of tremendous precipices and almost unfathomable gulfs, wondering how human ingenuity could construct a way through scenes so frowning and seemingly inaccessible. There are other channels of communication, formed by an excavation under the bed of a large river, or by tunneling mountains. The difficulties overcome impart to these works the impress of greatness. Apply this thought to the moral difficulties overcome in the sinner's salvation: the enmity of the carnal mind against God—its dislike of humbling truth—its repugnance to duty—its love of sin—its strong and almost invincible prejudices—the power of evil habits and bad passions nourished by long indulgence—the corrupt customs and maxims of the world—the influence of wicked men, and the agency of wicked spirits—all must be overcome, or the soul will not be converted. What power is adequate but that of God? What else, amid so many opposing influences, could keep the Church from utter extinction? Instead of wondering there is so little religion in the world, the wonder rather is that there is any; considering the obstacles in the way. The glory of it is to be given to God alone. How truly are the righteous said to be "scarcely saved;" not without powerful assistance, not without having been in imminent danger of perishing. In this respect it is a great salvation.

6. Once more: a work is deemed great in proportion *as its influence is extended through space and duration.* The discovery of America by Columbus has affected the temporal and spiritual condition of millions, in three quarters of the globe, from that day to this; and the influence is destined to continue and widen, to the end of the world. The conquests of Britain in Asia, and the colonization of New Holland by that Power, are now influencing the political and moral state of hundreds of millions of mankind; and seem destined to be the means of introducing modern civilisation and science into more than half the Eastern hemisphere. Wide however in extent, and permanent in duration, as may have been the influences of these enterprises, and of many others recorded on the page of history, they bear no comparison to the influences emanating from the cross of Christ. The former fill,

relatively, but a point of space, and a few years or ages of duration. Then they are well nigh forgotten. Behold in the Cross, an object whose influences have affected every individual of every generation; an object which diffuses a moral glory through the universe; one that will be remembered with the deepest interest, as long as souls exist; one which angels gaze at; one that probably will for ever affect all beings, in all worlds. Yes; the object of the great salvation is one that fills both eternity and immensity.

II. The hope of escape, on the part of the neglecter of this salvation, is fallacious and vain.

Men of infidel principles deny, of course, the reality of any such salvation as has been described, and maintain, either that death is a mere change in the mode of existence, from which no evil is to be apprehended, or an eternal sleep. They scout the idea of salvation from a danger, which they pretend to think purely imaginary. We are not now dealing with such. We refer to those who profess some belief in Divine Revelation—some respect for the Bible. They hope to escape, not by resisting the power, or hiding from the presence of GOD: not by being overlooked and forgotten in the immensity of His works: not on the ground that He is indifferent to moral distinctions, or regardless of human conduct. They are not so infatuated as to trust in anything of this sort. No: their hope of impunity is derived from some other source. It will be found, generally speaking, to rest on some one of the three following supports: either that all will be saved—or that a moral life is sufficient—or that in the close of life, if not before, perhaps in the very hour of dissolution, GOD will give them converting grace. These are the most plausible and popular grounds of a delusive hope.

As to the first, that *all will be saved.* Is the moral influence of this opinion good? Does it tend to make men humble, prayerful, watchful against sin? Has it a reforming power over the young? Who are most gratified to resort to meetings where it is held forth, the pious and devout, or the irreligious and careless? When, of two sides of a question, the one is safe, the other dangerous; when, by embracing the latter, nothing substantial is gained, and by embracing the former, nothing substantial is lost; what part does wisdom dictate? Besides, when the question was directly put to Christ, "Are there few that be saved?" why, if all are saved, did he not, on so fair an occasion, bring out the truth? Why give an answer, evidently teaching the contrary: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, LORD, LORD, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:" "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the kingdom of GOD, and *you yourselves thrust out.*"

When men find themselves driven from this ground, the refuge next resorted to is apt to be *worldly morality*—a very different thing from Christian morality, as it lays the main stress on duty to man, overlooking, to a great extent, duty to GOD. They bring themselves to believe, that if free from disreputable vice; if honest in dealings, good neighbors, useful citizens, and kind to their families; GOD will not be strict to mark what they call by the soft name of infirmities, but consider them as cancelled by a predominance of good deeds over evil. But what saith Scripture on this point? "Ye must be born again"—"Make you a new heart and a new spirit"—"He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life"—"Without holiness shall no man see the LORD." If these and similar passages mean anything, they must mean that something more spiritual than a cold worldly morality, however exact, is necessary to make men what they ought to be; fit for Heaven.

When convinced that neither an indiscriminate salvation, nor an external morality, is a safe reliance, men often flee, as a *dernier ressort*, to the hope *that some time in the course of life, possibly at the very close, GOD will interpose with his converting grace.* We grant this is possible; in some few instances, genuine death-bed repentance doubtless occurs; we have one clear instance in the Bible, the case of the penitent thief on the Cross. This was put there that none might utterly despair. But take notice, that in all the Bible is found but *one* such instance: that none may presume to delay. Shall everlasting interests be risked on a bare peradventure? Suppose, that after a life of irreligion, you have in the last sickness some feelings that seem like repentance: how are you to test their genuineness? Health is the proper time to bring such things to the proof. How can you determine that feelings, excited only by the near approach of death, are anything better than instinctive alarm, or selfish apprehension? Must not your sun, in such a case, descend beneath the horizon of life, in obscurity and doubt? Can there but be a dread, lest "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?"

The truth is, that to the impenitent sinner there is *no* escape. His sin will find him out. "The hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies." "If the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "Though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down." "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them—and they *shall not escape.*"

These views open the way to a multitude of reflections, of which only a few can now be introduced.

How many presumptuous hopes of impunity, fondly cherished by wicked men, are doomed to fatal and eternal disappointment!

Proportionate to the greatness of this salvation, is the obligation to seek its blessings. Reader, are you so doing? Striving to enter in at the strait gate? Practically regarding an interest in Christ as of all objects the most important? Preparing for an eternity, which will

be ever running on but never run out? In the same proportion is the guilt of neglecting such a salvation. Better, we repeat, to neglect anything than the soul. What anguish in the dying hour has the neglect occasioned to millions, when they saw the loss was irretrievable! As in the case of the dying sinner who exclaimed, "O, I would give worlds to be pardoned!"

A salvation so inestimable—so perfectly adapted to meet the moral necessities and relieve the spiritual miseries of man—so precious, in relation to the Agent employed, the price paid, the blessings conferred, and the duration to which it extends—is worthy of such a memorial as the LORD's Supper. Let us, therefore, at fitting times, "keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Why is this salvation, this pearl of price, so generally neglected among men? Can we account for the fact, except by the admission of the blindness and depravity of their hearts? How strange that man, the only being in this world capable of religion, should be so occupied with trifles, and so regardless of his highest interests!

A salvation so great, demands not only our personal acceptance of it, but our earnest efforts to recommend it to our friends and neighbors, and impart the knowledge of it to the most distant nations. Behold here an ample justification both of Christian labors at home, and of Christian Missions abroad. For these objects, how much needs to be done! Here is work enough for every individual in the Church of Christ. In this sacred community, let there be no idle, no indifferent, member. "Wherefore, beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain, in the LORD." Amen.

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SERMON CCCLXV.*

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THE STRENGTH OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

"(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever.

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness);

"Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you."—2 Corinthians, ix. 8—14.

The divinity of the Gospel is seen in its divine effects. In the beginning God made man in his own image, and humanity, though ruined by sin, remains the most wonderful proof of Almighty energy, goodness and skill. But the miracle of the likeness of God in man, is repeated with vast increase of honor to the Creator, and favor to the creature, when by the word of salvation sinners are transformed, as the Apostle Peter assures us, into "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter, i. 3, 4). The interval between the best perfection of a Christian and the perfection of God his Sanctifier, must be immeasurable; yet, as the reflection of light is light, the graces of Christian character are divine, because they are effects of divine grace.

The consequences of faith in the Gospel always correspond with the grace of the Gospel. The Gospel reveals the love of God to the believer, and faith works by love; God makes all grace abound toward the believer in all things, and faith abounds to every good work (8 ver.). His enjoyment of the great goodness of God, expands the believer's capacity of affection, and faculty of doing good. The greatness of the condescension of God in admitting the believer to his fellowship, and a co-operation in goodness, elevates him to a dignity and comprehensiveness of purpose, approaching, so far as the finite can

* Preached before the Foreign Evangelical Society, New York, May 5, 1844.

infinity, divine benevolence. The believer is united to Christ his glorified Head, and has a conscious active sympathy with all the members of Christ's true body, his Church. The Holy Ghost inspires him with holy life, and he knows it to be "the working of that mighty Power" (Eph. i. 29), whereby God is "subduing all things to himself" (Phil. iii. 21). God adopts him as his son, and all the children of his heavenly Father become his beloved brethren. And when through Christ, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he prays to God his Father for blessings upon the multitude, thus dear to him, in all lands and among all people, he feels himself linked to the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of His grace, who has said, "Unto me shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxv. 2). Feeble as the believer may seem to be, his means of Christian benevolence are unbounded, the counsels he follows are infallible, and wherever upon the face of the whole earth lives a needy soul, there, like the Spirit of Divine Love, he can go in the providence and bounty of God, laden with benefits; and thence, as the harvest pays back the seed of Spring manifold, will return, in the order of the same providence and bounty, blessings rich, fragrant, and multiplied upon his own soul, with abundant thanksgivings unto God.

This is the substance of our text, the length of which gives us the advantage of the Apostle's reasoning, always incomparably better than any the uninspired preacher can substitute for it. If the discourse should be long also, it will not be longer than the interest of the theme demands.

The occasion of the Apostle's address in this part of his epistle, was the necessity of the mother church at Jerusalem, which, besides suffering severely from the malignant bigotry of the Jews (1 Thess. ii. 14, 15), who, especially after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts xi. 19), spoiled them of their goods, and pressed them with a great fight of afflictions (Heb. x. 32–34), were now under the calamity of famine. (Acts xi. 27, 28.) Collections had been made for these "poor saints" in many churches, as those of Galatia (1 Cor. xvi. 1), and Macedonia (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 1—4), upon the just principle, that the Gentiles, having received the Gospel from Jerusalem, were bound to serve in carnal things those with whom they had been made partakers in spiritual things (Rom. xv. 27). The same kindness, promised, indeed, a year before (2 v.), is now asked from the Christians in Achaia, of which Corinth was the chief city. This introduces the whole subject of

CHRISTIAN CHARITY;

which, from the tenor of the New Testament, we may define to be,

LOVE TO CHRIST MANIFEST IN LOVE TO THOSE WHOM CHRIST LOVES.

We have before us the Apostle's doctrine, argument, and exhortations. Let us endeavor to profit by them, and learn the exercise of true Christian Charity, while we consider,

First. Its EFFORTS.

Secondly. Its RESOURCES.
Thirdly. Its ENCOURAGEMENTS.

FIRST: The EFFORTS of Christian Charity.

The Apostle sums up these, briefly and clearly, in the eighth verse, where he says, "that ye may abound to every good work." The true Christian manifests his charity,

1. In "good works." 2. In "every good work." 3. In "abounding to every good work."

1. What are *good works?* It has been a question, whether the name of God be derived from good, or good from the name of God. But as God is the alone standard of good, it becomes us rather to believe that good is the epithet which describes conformity with him, the source, the pattern and the end of all truth. Good works are such as God does.

There are works impossible for the creature, which belong to God only. He alone can create. He alone is the author and preserver of life. There are works forbidden to the subject and reserved to the sovereign—judgment and vengeance. "Judge not, lest ye be judged." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

But while God makes it sin for us to trench upon his prerogative of severity, he graciously qualifies us by his creative power, to resemble him, by imitating his acts of kindness. He is Himself infinite love. "He openeth his hand and supplieth the wants of everything that liveth." He is "the God of the stranger," the "Father of the fatherless," "the Husband of the widow," "the Spirit of consolation," and "the Light" in which alone we can "see light." Thus has he commanded us, in all our relations with our fellow creatures, to obey a law the fulfilling of which is love; and declared that we bear the best likeness to our Father in heaven, when as his children we are like him in love, pity, and doing good to the poor, the sorrowful, and the ignorant.

God has revealed himself most fully in his Son, Jesus Christ, by whom he declares his unsearchable love to our lost race, and the way, the truth, and the life, by which the sinner may return to Him and to happiness. The Son of God, by taking upon himself our nature, and walking in all our human duties, has translated for man the divine example. His whole life was a "going about doing good;" his every miracle an act of goodness; his entire aim mercy to the wants and ills of this life, and, especially, mercy to the soul in the salvation, by his cross, of the life everlasting. None ever sought relief from him in vain. The heathen, the Samaritan and the publican, the sick in body and the sick in mind, the despised, the outcast and the criminal, were all welcome to his goodness.

At the same time, and by the same salvation, he has inseparably united to that faith which enjoys his redeeming power, a love like his own. None can follow him except in love for his people, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another;" in doing

good to all who need our service, for, pointing to every variety of human suffering, he says, "Inasmuch as ye do unto the least of these, ye do unto me;" and, above all, in spreading the good news of salvation from sin, the best remedy for all ill, and the best solace of all sorrow, the fruits of sin, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature." Thus are we to prove our love to God, by acts of goodness to all he loves upon earth, and our love to Christ, whose love has given us all, by doing good in his most holy name.

2. There is no limit set to this goodness which is required of the Christian. "*Every* good work" is his duty. Every form of goodness he is to attempt. Every human creature he is to serve. The love of the Christian is philanthropy. The field of the Christian is the world. Christianity knows neither country nor nation, allows no exception of character or condition. It is like the sun and the rain, full of blessing for all. Wherever there is good to be done, there lies the Christian's service to God and his Master. He owes duties to his household, but every man is his neighbor. He owes duties to his country, but every man is his brother. It is treason against God, who so loved the world as to send his Son Jesus to take away the sins of the world, for him to say, Thus far may I go in goodness, but no further. The Gospel, which he is commanded to preach to every creature, binds him a debtor to seek that creature's good, and endeavor to save that creature's soul. Our duty is never done, while there remains any good for us to do.

3. So far from any partial goodness being enough, the true Christian *abounds* to every good work, in liberality, constancy and zeal.

God gives liberally, and he loves a cheerful giver, who is like himself. There must be no stint nor grudge in our charity, but "all bountifulness;" not as from covetousness which restrains, nor from necessity which measures, but from the overflow of a loving spirit, which delights to pour forth, the more it pours forth. We read of but two instances in which the Master approved a service as sufficient; that of the widow who gave all that she had, and that of Mary who did what she could. The rule of Christian goodness is to love our neighbor, every man, as ourselves; the example of Christianity the devotion of Christ, who gave himself, in all the sympathies of humanity, and in all his divine attributes for us.

This must be constant. The Redeemer, with all his mighty power, wrought while it was day. The crown of life awaits only those who are faithful unto death. There is no rest promised or allowed to the servant of Christ here. All his time belongs to God, with all he is and all he has, and, therefore, belongs to the Church and to mankind for Christ's sake. He may "wait for his shadow," and hope for eternal repose in the joy of his Lord, but it must be as the faithful laborer who works through the heat and burden of the day, glad to do good until the Master says, "Well done!"

Need we add, that he must be abundant in zeal? Is he not to love

God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength? Has not Christ bought him, all he is, all he has, and all he can be or can have through grace, with the price of his most precious blood?

Is he not, therefore, bound to serve unto the uttermost all whom God has commanded him to serve? When we contemplate the vast field of our labor, the wide ripe harvest into which we thrust the sickle, the vast multitude of various sufferers who require our goodness, is there any zeal that can overflow the limits of duty, that can pay back the debt we owe to Christ, or that can fulfil the command to be "merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful?"

Thus, my brethren, must we "abound to every good work," if we would walk worthy of our Christian vocation, and bear the image of our God.

Does any one ask in reply, Who is sufficient for these things? Whose strength, whose means, whose faculties of heart and mind are equal to such a duty? How can we reach every individual of our race? How relieve every want of every sufferer? Is there not danger that in thus enlarging our aims, and reaching after so much in our purposes, we may neglect and trample upon duties nearer to our homes, and by a fantastic extravagance waste the charity, which, under a judicious economy, might accomplish more certain good? My brethren, these are the doubts of ignorance, or the hesitations of unbelief. The Christian is sufficient for nothing of himself, but when God enjoins upon us a duty fitting the followers of Christ and the children of the Father of Christ, he makes it our privilege by the assurance of strength to perform it from on high. For consider

SECONDLY: The RESOURCES of Christian Charity.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

The resources of the Christian are the grace of God, "all grace," all grace "abounding," all grace "abounding always," all grace abounding always to "all sufficiency in all things," that he may be "enriched in everything to all bountifulness."

This includes—

The grace of God *in Christ.*

The grace of God *in the Spirit.*

The grace of God *in Providence.*

1. The grace of God in Christ.

The grace of God in Christ was his eternal *purpose*, his most delightful purpose, his greatest purpose, for it was his purpose to reveal his most manifold wisdom, his most mighty power, his most perfect truth in goodness and mercy toward lost sinners, for the study and admiration of all his intelligent creatures. For thus says the Apostle—(Ephes. i., 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of

his will, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him."

Yes, holy brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, it is the purpose of grace in the Gospel of the Son of God to triumph over sin throughout our suffering world, and bring it again and for ever into communion with heaven. Small as the band of the "predestinated," the "chosen," and the "accepted," may seem to be now, all nations shall yet be made to swell its happy numbers. The time is coming when, in all the earth, every heart will exult and every tongue rejoice with the love of God. Then shall our deserts be as the Eden of the Lord, and tears and want and strifes and wrong be known no more, and concord, joy, and a common bliss unite the long-distracted family. The victory of the King of Peace and Righteousness will be complete, and the full grace of that mystery be manifest, "which," as our beloved brother Paul writes, "from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." This is the grace of God which strengthens every Christian in doing good. It is the purpose of God, which "worketh in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Is God not able to execute his decrees of grace in Christ? So is he "able to make all grace abound," to "all sufficiency" in our "every good work."

The grace of God is infinite in the *merits* of Christ the Saviour, for they are the merits of God incarnate. It was the Son of God, who walked in all the duties of man. Who dare limit the reward of his obedience? It was the Son of God, who dwelt in the sufferer when he drank the cup of trembling, when it pleased the Father to bruise him and to put him to grief, and when, pouring out his soul unto death, he cried, "It is finished." Who dare limit the power of his atonement? It was the Son of God, who burst the bars of death, and cleft the heavens for the upward way of the man Christ Jesus, "to make continual intercession for us," not as a suppliant kneeling at his Father's feet, but as a Son and a Prince, the true ISRAEL, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Who dare limit the efficiency of his prayers?

It is the infiniteness of Christ's merits as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jesus our atonement, and the glorified Elder Brother of his church, that warrants the Christian's zeal in every good work, for the present and eternal good of man. Show me a sinner so vile that Christ cannot save him, a saint so weak that Christ cannot strengthen him, a mourner

so sad that Christ cannot comfort him, and only then shall we discover one whom a Christian cannot bless.

The vocation of the Christian to every good work, is itself part of the grace of God in Christ. For what says the Evangelist? "To as many as received him gave he power (right, prerogative), to become the Sons of God," because they are united unto Him as their Head, and, as his body, are partakers with him in all things which belong to his redemption. Therefore has the Christian all grace in all things to every good work, because he is one with Christ, the Hope, the Blessing, and the Saviour of all who believe in his name. Is there a bound to the grace of God in Christ? That alone is the bound of the Christian's privilege to do good.

2. The grace of God in the Spirit.

As God the Father sent his Son, and God the Son wrought out the merit of salvation, God the Holy Ghost executes his peculiar office in making the salvation efficient according to the eternal counsel of grace.

The grace of the Spirit is in the *word*, inspired by his almighty energy, adapted by his unerring wisdom, and rendered divinely sweet by his pervading love, for the conversion and sanctification of the sinful soul. Thus, when guided by its teachings, proclaiming its doctrines, and relying upon its power, the Christian knows that the instrument of goodness he wields is the very truth of God, which must prevail in accomplishing the good whereto God sent it. He is certain of success, the best success, the most complete success, as certain as that right shall prevail over wrong, wisdom over error, and the Gospel over "every imagination which exalteth itself against God." The truth of the word of God is the grace of the believer in doing good.

The grace of the Spirit is in the *Church*, for it is only the power of Him "who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead," and "set him at God's right hand in heavenly places," which has "quickened" every member of Christ's spiritual body from "death in trespasses and sins;" and he, who gives the Church life, supplies it with all the means of growing life to perfection in glory. The Spirit, by the word, is able to make grace abound to the Church in wisdom, even the knowledge of God and his will; in strength, enabling them to resist temptation and put forth a superhuman power in all holy service; and in love, uniting its members to each other, and in devotion to Christ, and in doing good to man. And this grace of the Spirit in the people of God, and in himself as one of them, strengthens the believer to every good work, when he thinks of the many-hearted prayer that ascends for blessing upon his labors, and of the many-handed zeal conspiring with his to subdue the world by the cross; and, especially, as he anticipates the promised day, now retarded only by the quarrels and the doubtings of the church, when that Spirit shall be poured forth without measure upon the people of God, and every Christian stand boldly and closely up to his duty, and the army of Israel, their multitudinous hosts in firm phalanx and with the instant determination of one heart, will urge forward its resistless march, Jesus, the captain of salvation, at its

head, until the banners of peace, and love, and righteousness, wave over the whole earth. The Spirit of God in the Church, is the strength of every believer to good works.

The Spirit in the *conscience*, is the power of God for the conversion of the world. If He wield not the word, no human arm has strength to lift up the mighty weapon and flash its splendors in the light; but, when his own hand grasps his own sword, he drives it to the very quick of men's morbid souls, and none can resist its double-edged keenness. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, he slew thousands to give them life again, and thus will he prevail until all his enemies bow in penitence before him. Wherefore, then, does he delay his triumph? Is his arm shortened? Has his word lost its power? No (all glory to the almighty Paraclete)! He can come down, and convert all this assembly in a moment. He can convert all in every congregation throughout our land, throughout Europe, throughout Christendom. He can spread his wings over all the earth, and, suddenly as light chased old Chaos, turn all her sinners into saints, and her waste places into Paradise. Why, then, does not the light and the glory appear? Christians, the Holy Spirit is given in answer to fervent, believing prayer. Do we believe in the sufficiency of his grace? When the Church is able to grasp the fulness of the promise, and trust in the necessity and almightiness of the Holy Ghost, the fulness and the blessing shall be ours, and the whole earth the Lord's. It is this grace, which strengthens the Christian in his work for the world's salvation. There is no conscience the Holy Ghost cannot quicken, no heart he cannot sanctify, and, therefore, there is no soul we should not seek to save.

3. The grace of God in providence.

All the means of doing good are in his hands. He requires us to work by means, for our instruction, and in accommodation to our weakness; but he is ready to supply the zealous Christian with all means, means sufficient unto every good work.

Do we need money? His is the silver and the gold. Money is as much his gift as was the manna to the pilgrim tribes. If his people faithfully use what he gives them, he can, and he will, give them more in answer to their faith, for the same purpose; and when the treasury seems utterly exhausted, from "their deep poverty having abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. viii. 2), he can, by various channels, again enrich them in everything "to all bountifulness" (11 v.). "He that giveth to the poor," whether they want the bread of this life, or that of the life to come, "lendeth to the Lord," and none pay interest so quickly or so largely as He. He returns the trust multiplied, that, through another exercise of zeal, it may be multiplied again. When has the Church put the grace of God to this test? When has she had the faith of the widow, to cast in all her living to the treasury of the Lord, believing that He can supply more? How many Christians have impoverished themselves for His sake, who "for their sakes became poor?" Some few, who have had but little to part with, may say that they have left all, like the disciples, whose all was

a few fishing boats and well worn nets; but how many rich men, who call Jesus, "Good Master," would go away sorrowful, if required to sell all they had for Christ's service? Yet, my brethren, until the Church attains something like this liberality, we do not fully trust God's providence in the supply of money. If Christians had given to God that, which, in his chastening, he has taken from them in the last seven years, what a stupendous advance in good might have been made? O that we had grace to try this experiment for once! we would never relapse into our slow, "covetous" giving (5 v.) again.

As with money, so with men. "Pray ye to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send laborers into his vineyard," said the Saviour. How send them? Clearly by his grace in their hearts inclining them to say, Send us. My brethren, the moment we pray this prayer, and prove our sincerity in it by being ready to support the sent, God is able and willing to send them. Indeed, he anticipates this by giving us already more candidates for such holy labor, than we can employ by our present liberality. Hundreds are waiting for the work; send them, and Providence will make ready thousands more. There never was a time yet in which his providence was not in advance of our faith.

As with money and men, so with other facilities of usefulness. When Christian zeal first began, in modern times, to send the missionary, and to give the Scriptures, how few and difficult were the channels of communication, and those how interrupted by wars among the nations? How poor, comparatively, was the knowledge of languages, and how slow and expensive the art of printing? Now, God, by agents utterly unknown to men before the Church proved her need of them, has vastly increased the facilities of reaching and corresponding with distant people; the written and systematized languages of the world have been nearly doubled, and that by the philological labors of missionaries, more than of any other class of students; and by the improved machinery and science of the press, the cost of publication is reduced to less than a fourth part, while there is peace throughout the world, as at the advent of Jesus in mortal weakness, for his coming again in mighty power. No mind could have anticipated this, a life-time ago; no mind can imagine what God can do in the life-time next to come. The grace of God in providence leads his Church far before their zeal.

All the necessary direction, God, in providence, will give. We may desire by God's grace to do good, but we must also learn from God's grace *how* to do good. He can suggest a thousand methods of doing good, of which we are yet ignorant, but which will be, by his blessing, most wisely efficient. How recently has he taught us to teach Sunday Schools, and to distribute tracts, and Bibles, and good books, enabling the poor to read, and giving them libraries? And to educate poor young men, "rich in faith," whom he has chosen for his ministry, that from their scanty provisions, as from the wallet of the lad in the Gospels, he might multiply the bread of life for thousands, and the fragments that remain be twenty fold more than the supply at the beginning? How has he led us to combine our strength, and by a wise co-

operation, to distribute labor and increase results immeasurably? And what skill has he added to our first crude attempts among the heathen, from the experience of practical men, guided by his counsels? But the time would fail me to tell of the grace of God in the guidance of his people, when they "commit their way" of Christian charity fairly to him.

So will his providence open our passage through difficulties, whether they arise from the pride of men's imaginations, the jealousy of governments, the malice of persecutors, or all combined. Jesus, the Breaker, goes up before us. When war and political tumult agitate the seas, God is upon the waters. He can, he does, he will, control all, move all, and overrule all, for the good of his Church. The cupidity of men may make a wide breach in the wall of China, but the Ark of the Lord, borne upon the shoulders of consecrated Christians, enters with sin that grace may much more abound. A cruel lust of conquest, with an atrocity never paralleled in any other warfare, may penetrate far into Afghanistan, but the King of Peace and Righteousness will secure the meek and lowly triumphs of a far greater conquest. Even the enslaving of the black man, the right of which no sophistry can justify, and the continuance of which no circumstances can excuse, has been the occasion of introducing within the benighted shores of Africa, the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. Who can tell what the same providence may do in another year, when the power of Mohammedanism reels and totters, opening a way for a new crusade, which will employ no sword but that of the Spirit; when all Europe sits upon a smouldering volcano; when an hour of political convulsion may topple down the proud towers of man's strong enemy, pontifical Rome; and the giant, PEOPLE, is struggling with more than earthquake strength to throw off from his oppressed but unbroken bosom, the thrones and altars which tyrant bigots heap upon it? Let but the Church go forward, and seas of difficulty shall make a dry path for her feet. Mountains shall sink, and valleys rise, for the highway of our God.

Yes, my brethren, Christ is "Head over all things," and (ten thousand blessings on that Name which is above every name!) "Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." There is not an extension of trade, an advance of science, a revolution in government,—no, not a tide that runs, nor a wind that fills a sail,—which is not part of that "mighty" working by which God is subduing all things to Himself. With such resources, is not the Christian able to "abound in every good work?"

THIRDLY: The ENCOURAGEMENTS of Christian Charity.

These, as presented in the text, are three:

The good of those we serve; the glory of God; and the return of blessing on ourselves.

1. The good of those we serve. (12 v.) The particular reference here is to the temporal wants of the church at Jerusalem; but when Christian charity embraces all men (13 v.), the good must be taken in its most extensive meaning, and, especially, as including

The salvation of the soul.

The world is full of wants and woes, because it is full of sins, and the Gospel which takes away the curse, alone can relieve and console its sorrows; and, therefore, it is the delight of the Christian, who has been renewed with the divine likeness, to extend for the benefit of his fellow sufferers, the Gospel, which hushes the tumults of war, and rebukes oppression, and takes the burden from the captive, and points every sufferer to the sympathy of Jesus and the "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

When we think of the love of God, of what Christ has suffered, and of all the Spirit has done or is doing for the soul, we ask with the astonished Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" But, when we reflect upon what the soul is, and what through divine grace it will be, great as the price of its redemption was, and much as we must adore the riches of divine mercy, we see that there was no waste of the Redeemer's blood, and that the joy of beholding his ransomed ones complete in glory, was worth the sufferings which purchased it. Here we can know but little of that intellect and affection, which make the spiritual creature greatest of the works of God, though vast is now the comprehension and the activity of man in thought and affection. But what must the human mind be, when heaven for ages shall have cultivated its expansiveness, when its faculties shall have shaken off every trammel, and it ranges with ever increasing vision, through the ever widening glories of God, and God himself is the immediate guide of its inquiries! What worlds on worlds shall then roll within its thought? What joy of holy knowledge shall then radiate through all its stupendous capacity? When even now the heart grows and finds room for each and all the multitude of beings whom God commends to its affections, what will that affection be in a sphere too vast for the collisions of self, too rich for the suspicions of jealousy, too happy for the gradations of pride; and when, countless as are the inhabitants of our eternal home, we shall recognize every brother, and the electric fire of love thrill ever and at the same instant through all hearts of God's holy family?

Think of nature, when it was chaos; when darkness brooded over all; when the lawless winds rushed and battled together; when the waters raged, and the worlds, as yet in shapeless masses, were jostled and confounded in the universal waste; and then, of that nature, when the spirit of God had done his work, and light was poured out like a golden cordial from the Almighty throne, and the calm waters reflected it, and the winds breathed harmonies of praise, and the green soil teemed with flowers, and the forests with foliage; when the orbs took their stations in the choral dance of joy, and myriads of glorious beings walked amidst the new creation, admiring, adoring and blessing the divine Author and Designer, while He beheld all with complacency, for all was very good. Yet this was but a faint type of the change, wrought by the same Spirit in that universe, the human soul, by the

power of the Gospel. Worse than chaos would have been the darkness of its despair, the conflict of its passions, the ruin of its faculties; but beautiful as nature in her morning hour will it be, when in heavenly bliss it is serene with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and populous with the images of all that is holy and pure and glad. It is the blessedness of Christian charity to be employed as an instrument in the work; it will be its blessedness to share in the divine satisfaction of contemplating its finished and eternal excellence.

2. The glory of God.

This is the great purpose of our vocation, and the great aim of Christian zeal; and in nothing can the Christian promote the glory of God so much as in devotion to Christian charity.

Thus says the Apostle: "The administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant by many *thanksgivings unto God;* whiles by the experiment of this ministration *they glorify God* for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men."

"By this," said the Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is the divine love in the life of Jesus, his poverty that we might be rich, his lowliness that we might be exalted, his unceasing zeal that our rest might be eternal, and his death that we might never die, which give such attractiveness to the Gospel. It is the same divine love, dwelling in the Christian's bosom, controlling all his means for the good of every man who needs, humbling him to be every man's servant, with all his energies and at every sacrifice, even of life itself, if death must be braved in his merciful mission, which convinces the world that faith in Jesus is no idle dream, but a celestial principle triumphing over the narrowness of self, and uplifting the spirit of man, by nature so fallen into enmities and envyings, and jealous suspicions of his fellow man, to a sympathy with the mercy and benefactions of God. It is because this Christian light does not shine, or shines so faintly through the covetousness and indolence of the Church, that men do not glorify our Father which is in heaven. When Christians reach fully the elevation of Christian charity, no infidelity can refuse the conviction that it is other than the great power of God.

The Christian, who hears of our charity, who, perhaps, receives some of its benefits, who beholds its saving consequences, will feel his faith strengthened, and his zeal made strong by our example and sympathy, for then will he know by signs indubitable, that the arm of God is not shortened, and that the Holy Ghost is yet present with his people in sanctifying power; that he works not alone, but in company with Christ's many chosen, whose prayers ascend and whose hands are joined with his, and that the promise given to faith is secured by the aggregated confidence of many believers. Then, while he gives all glory to God, will he undertake with new spirit every good work. O brethren, by our faint-heartedness and slowness, and partial charity, we discourage each other. Sight struggles against faith, when so few

proofs of evangelical power are manifest. Let each of us shake off this unworthy sloth, and the contagion of our zeal will be felt throughout the body of Christ; every Christian warming and cheering his brother, receiving from him warmth and courage in return, until the whole Church is swept away by love of Christ, to live only for Him and his cause.

Nor is it the Church alone that observes our charity, the divine effect of divine grace. The hosts of God's angels, intent upon the mysteries of redemption and the providence of Christ in consummating its triumph, observe the progress of the Church. If they rejoice over the first penitence of the sinner, how much more will they rejoice over that repentance manifested in the ripe yet growing fruits of Christian zeal! If throughout eternity they shall admire Jesus in his saints, as they shine in their Master's glory, how much must they delight in every new progress we are making on earth to that celestial perfection! How strange to those eager servants of the divine will must seem our feeble efforts, evidence of faint love for Christ! But were the Church to put on her beautiful garments, and in grand union of all her energies, and with ever increasing grace, shine in the light of abounding charity, how would they make heaven ring with hallelujahs to our God and his Christ!

Christians, is there not reason for us to count all things but loss, that we may convince the world of Christ, waken to emulation of Jesus his drowsy Church, and fill heaven with the praise of innumerable angels?

3. The return of blessings on ourselves.

We have been obliged several times to anticipate this thought, but cannot dwell upon it too often or too long. We are linked vitally in our Christian being to every Christian. We need their love, their prayers, and their coöperation.

O how precious is a Christian's *love*, the love of one beloved himself of God, who takes us into the same heart with Christ, and loves us for Christ's sake! It is our likeness to Christ, manifest in our strong charity for them and for all men," which awakens this Christian love towards us, as the Apostle here says to the Corinthians, they "long after you for the exceeding grace of God toward you." Such was the love of Christians, when in the early times of persecution they had one purse, and acknowledged only one name; now how sadly distant and cold towards each other are those Christians who divide themselves under many names! No wonder our blessings are few and our Christian comforts incomplete. But how like heaven would the Church on earth be, were our interchanges of service and love made from full hearts, and universally with God's true children!

How precious is a Christian's prayer, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, who goes with holy boldness to the throne of grace, pleading for us through the strong intercessions of the Son of God, who is ever the advocate of his people, and whom the Father heareth always! When the prayer of a man, subject to like passions with ourselves, offered in faith, opened the windows of heaven, which his pray-

ers had before shut for more than three years, and brought down abundance of rain, what showers of blessing must descend upon that Christian soul for whom a Christian prays! But, when a general charity shall awaken in each Christian soul such grateful prayer for all his Christian brothers, and the countless petitions mingle as they rise in a cloud of faith, like fragrant exhalations from "a field the Lord hath blessed," who can estimate the deluge of mercy that shall flow from the throne of our common Father, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea?

And with these prayers there will be a universal coöperation unto every good work. All hearts will beat in unison with the heart of Christ; all his members be zealous in their several spheres to do his gracious will, and the strength of the Church, now shamelessly dormant or distracted for want of mutual understanding, or wasted in fratricidal controversy about things indifferent, be as the fulness of his power who filleth all in all.

O my brethren, it but needs that the Church live and love and labor as the body of Christ, to give us a resistless and speedy triumph over all the opposition of earth and hell to "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

Christians, the Society at whose call we have assembled this evening, affords us a most noble opportunity of illustrating the vastness, richness and power of true Christian charity. Its purpose is to assist evangelical Christians in foreign lands, and especially on the continent of Europe, in maintaining and spreading the Gospel of our common Lord.

I might plead with you for them as the Apostle did for the church at Jerusalem. They are in trouble. The might of the oppressor is on them. They are pursued by an idolatrous bigotry, more malignant than the wrath of the Jew against the Christian innovators who strove to dissipate the darkness of long established forms. They are pinched by famine, not of bread, but of the word of life. Yet are they brethren of our faith. We cannot pray "Our Father, who art in heaven," we cannot take the bread and the wine of the sacraments, we cannot follow Christ, without acknowledging them bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, in the body of Jesus.

As the Gentiles received the Gospel from the church of Jerusalem, so have we received the blessings of that second Pentecost, the blessed Reformation, through them. It is the land of Calvin that calls us to return unto them a grateful recompense; the land of Luther, the land of Zuingle, the land of those sturdy Protestants, in the unconquerable Low Countries, whose church was baptized into fellowship with Jesus, by a double deluge of blood and water. Brethren, the cry comes to us for help from the saints which are at Geneva, the modern Jerusalem, whence has gone forth God's second proclamation of religious truth and civil freedom. Can we deny their claim?

Shall we reply, as some of little faith have done, that our own land

needs all our resources and sympathies? Was Achaia, was Galatia, was Macedonia, perfectly converted, and supplied with Christian privileges, when Paul, by inspiration, begged from them for the poor saints of the mother church at Jerusalem? Was not the grace of God manifest toward the churches of Macedonia, when, in "a great trial of affliction," and "out of their deep poverty," they abounded "in riches of liberality?" All our resources needed for our own land! Our resources are the infinite grace of God, and are they not sufficient to every good work? I know that our land needs much, but where is there a church or a Christian impoverished by what has been done at home? When we have spent all that we have in religious charities, and God refuses to give us more, we may hold back our hand from works to which his providence evidently directs us, and, especially, from duties which have more of debt than giving in them. There is no need that we should do less for our own people, but there is strong need that we do more for Chirst. And where is there a heart which loves the cause of Christ abroad, that does less for the cause of Christ at home? No, like the cruse of the faithful widow, the Christian's means grow with giving, and the restraining of them tends only to poverty. Let Christian charity act worthy of its name, and the word of God is pledged for our sufficiency or abundance in every good work. When divine grace is exhausted, then we may hesitate.

But the advocate of this cause may take yet higher ground. It is, as we have proved, indispensable to the triumph of evangelical truth, that its friends be united in catholic love, and concert of action. We must make practical that article of our faith, which holds to one Church, and one communion of saints. The hosts of antichristian Rome are many, but never divided. One heart, beating within the Vatican, circulates one zeal through all the monstrous body, which returns again to feed the fountain of its pernicious life. Popery knows no country, but mingles with all people; speaks all languages, but one creed: shouts for democracy in America, and excommunicates the liberals of Spain; demands repeal for Ireland, and arrests in France the movement of July; tolerates no other religion when it has the power, and whimpers of persecution if in Protestant lands the Bible is read in the schools. It speaks from the imperial city, and in all the world, cardinal and prelate, and monk and priest and penitent, own, by mystic sign and ready genuflexion, devout submission. Its eyes are upon every man; its voice is heard in royal cabinets and republican legislatures; its hands tamper with the absolute sceptre and pollute the ballot box; its learning gives tutors to the children of the great, and opens free schools of error for the children of the many; its charities mingle the poison of idolatry with bread for the hungry and medicines for the sick. Everywhere it is one, though in a thousand shapes. Who can avoid admiration of the vastness, the energy, and the system of its combination! No wonder they are so strong, when they are so united.

Brethren, let the tactics of an enemy teach us the method of success which the Gospel has taught in vain. There are portions of the

Christian world not papal, whose narrow bigotry refuses union with us; but what, except unworthy suspicions and weakness of faith, prevents a catholicism of evangelical servants under our one Head and High Priest, Jesus? Why should we know country, or language, or race, when we are children of one Father, and servants of a mission to the world?

It is the glory of this Society that it has been the first to stretch the hand of Christian fellowship to Christians beyond the seas, and say, Brethren, we are one. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Christ has broken down all walls of partition between us, we are "one body by his cross." The tie that binds us is stronger and more noble than all the relations of earth. Henceforth our union shall be practical. Your wants shall be ours, your labors ours, your successes ours; our hearts, our prayers, our means, shall be yours.

Let but this spirit prevail throughout the Church, and, no longer sickly, feeble, and convulsed, she will shake off the dust of her shame, and putting on her majesty, beauty, and strength, walk forth the true presentment of Christ on earth; before the mild splendors of her brow, error and superstition, and cruel hate, will fly like mists at morning light, and her hands, filled to overflowing with the grace of God, will scatter the blessings of peace, and righteousness, and knowledge, over all the world. This is the second reformation we need, another descent of the Holy Ghost, the sure precursor of complete redemption. God forbid that there should be any diminution of effort for the good of our countrymen; yet, if we were obliged to choose, such an exhibition of the communion of saints as this league of Christian love presents, were worth the planting of a thousand churches at home.

Let us also consider the opportunities and means of usefulness which our European brethren enjoy. The fabrics of superstition, which here are new and modified, there are crumbling to ruins, tottering in decayed ugliness to their fall. The people more than suspect the alliance of priesthood and tyranny to grind them in bondage. Every blow now aimed at the despot, strikes the bigot ministers of a desecrated cross. If the Bible be not recognized as the charter of freedom, the right to read it will be claimed as the privilege of freemen. The sympathies of every liberal heart are with a free religion, every advance of popular rights opens the way for the Gospel, and each hour is big with portents of far-spreading changes.

And with what means do our brethren work? By every method of prayer and action which the Gospel enjoins. But they have also recalled from long disuse that system to which Christianity owed its first, most rapid, and greatest successes, the employment of *the humble* and *the many* in the distribution of the simple truth. Jesus was an humble man. He wore no doctor's robe, and taught neither in Lyceum, Porch, Academy, nor Pharisaic school. He went forth into the streets of the city, and the highways of the country, a poor man

among poor men. He chose his Apostles not from the scribes and rulers, but the unlearned fishermen of Galilee, and he sent out the seventy as he had done the twelve, to teach as he had taught. Then was Christianity pure, and when the Church grew by the multitude of her converts, her multitude of God-inspired, humble men, carried among the nations the Gospel they believed and loved; and then did power, and priesthood, and ancient prejudices and arrogant philosophies, go down before the truth in its lowly majesty. So would the church have continued to prevail, had not those, her wily enemies, changed their force for policy, and, bribing her with gifts, obtained her baptism, entered her citadels, filled her offices, corrupting what they were sworn to preserve, and polluting the sacraments they administered.

I would not speak in disparagement of learning, with proper limits, as an aid to religion. But the Church has too much idolized learning and authority ever since the Reformation. And what has been the consequence? In university after university, on the continent of Europe, professors of theology have substituted a proud rationalism for the child-like faith of Jesus; and still more recently the most venerable seat of learning in Britain has startled the Protestant world with the bad design of uniting learning, genius, and taste, in a conspiracy to bring back the ages of darkness upon the world, when the few ruled the many and fattened the priesthood. Popery again uplifts her bruised and brazen face in hope, as she sees one so hoary with years entering her noviciate, aping her pretensions, copying her garments, and practising her mummeries; boasting her titles, bearing aloft her symbols, and attempting, with ridiculous failure, the thunder of her anathemas. Not a few Christians prognosticate a general mischief, and would invoke some Christian Hercules to slay the hydra that comes forth from deeper shades than the Lernæan swamp to ravage the Church.

Our friends in France and Switzerland have taught us better means and better hopes, by sending an army of simple men, with no other weapon than the pure Gospel on the holy page; and God, who blessed the rod of Moses, and the hammer of Jael, and the labors of primitive Christianity, has blessed, and will bless, the colporteurs with their Bibles and their Tracts. Already they diffuse the holy leaven. Already have many souls been brought to God. Already does superstition gnash her teeth, as she feels the net drawn closer and closer around her by the multitudes of these faithful men. Let us but increase the army as we may, and Babylon herself shall fall before them. Strength is in their weakness, for the excellency of the power is of God.

Consider, also, our deep interest in their successes. Already do many Christians tremble at the incursions of popery upon our own soil. A little while since, some of us may have smiled at these fears as visionary. The light of the nineteenth century seemed too great, in this land of free thought, to allow the influence of such superstition over a single mind not educated under it from early life. But have we

not seen, within a few years past, thousands of converts flocking around the standard of a vulgar, ignorant, and vile leader, whose pretensions to prophecy would be most contemptible, had they not been so mischievous? Have we not also been astonished at the defection of grave and educated men, from the simple Gospel as it is written in God's own word, to the authority of shadowy tradition; who, while they insist upon a church in a priesthood of doubtful genealogy, would revive the aristocracy of ancient Pharisaism, which accounted the common people as little better than profane? The growth of Mormonism among the vulgar, and of this perversion of Christian doctrine, which has no name of sufficient dignity for utterance here among the more refined, show us too plainly that the human mind, in no circumstances, can be preserved from superstition, except by the Spirit of God.

We are not then safe from Romanism. Every eastern wind wafts hitherward its priests and adherents, laden with gifts to corrupt our people. Already has the cry been heard, arousing Christians to defence of truth and freedom. But whence do they come? Why stand we only on the defensive? Why may we not cross the sea and besiege Carthage? Why not plant our vanguards on the passes of the Alps, send our spies into the very camp of the enemy, and await the happy moment (which, if it please God, is not distant), when, like Attila, though with better weapons and higher aims, we may thunder at the gates of Rome itself? When ancient Rome fell, the empire was broken into fragments. When papal Rome falls, popery will soon be no more. One blow on the head is worth a hundred at its extremities. One thrust to its heart, and all the convolutions of its myriad folds will relax in death. Are there no smooth stones in "the brook that flows fast by the oracles of God?" Is there no shepherd boy nor herdsman's son among those mountain Christians to wield a sling?

Christian brethren, I have done.

I congratulate you on your high vocation to abound in every good work.

I congratulate you on the infinite resources of your charity, the sufficiency of the grace of God.

I congratulate you on the vast rewards which await your certain successes.

I congratulate you on the present opportunity to prove your belief in the promise, that though you give all you have, the wealth of God will supply you with abundance more.

"Now He that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." Amen.

SERMON CCCLXVI.

THE LAMENTATION.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—Jer. viii. 20.

"Who can conceive the emotions with which this sentiment will be uttered, when it comes from the heart agonized with despair? Many, who have read it again and again without feeling, who have perhaps slept in insensibility when it has been pronounced from the pulpit, have uttered it in tones of terror in a dying hour, and have been overwhelmed in view of it at the judgment seat. The figure of a harvest appears to be a favorite one with the sacred writers, to illustrate the condition of man. The world is the field. The messengers of God are now abroad, gathering in the harvest. The children of the kingdom will soon be all gathered to their heavenly home; and the impenitent cast out for ever, like the weeds and tares which are burned. It will be but a short time before the angels in Heaven will welcome the harvest home; and but a few more suns will rise and set, before the lost will exclaim, in hopeless despair; "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

There are but few, if any, who now think that they shall be left at the time of ingathering. They feel that, though their safety be not now ensured, they will soon be led to the Christian's hope and joy. Thousands have, on a dying bed, acknowledged that this false hope deluded them to neglect the immediate duties which God has enjoined. They have been struck with amazement and despair, when they found that they were dying; and that, after all, the harvest was actually past, the summer ended, and they not saved.

Probably no one ever really expected to be left in this condition. There is no one who believes that he shall ever feel the horrors of eternal wo. And yet one after another is continually leaving us with no hope to cheer a dying hour. Can any language describe the feelings of such an hour?

But, says one, "I have no fear that this will be the case with me." The very fact that you have no fear is the source of the greatest danger, that you will not escape this awful doom. As long as Satan can keep you from fear, he is sure of your destruction. He asks for nothing more than that you should cast away fear. He exults in your composure, and rejoices day after day, as he sees that the harvest is drawing to a close, that the summer is nearly ended.

But who are they, who shall hereafter take up the sad lament of the text? Look at the profligate man. He says it is no matter how

I live in this world; all the punishment I have to fear, I shall receive here. This idea keeps him quiet and indifferent now; but in a dying hour conscience bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. He cannot silence its compunctious visitings. He writhes upon his bed in mental agony, shrinking from the awful presence of his Judge. He goes before the judgment seat, from the midst of his sins; and in the anguish of his despair he exclaims, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." Satan claims him as his own. Like Judas, he goes to his own place; "and the smoke of his torment for ever ascendeth," as he exclaims, "I am not saved! I am not saved!"

Accompany me to the bedside of this dying youth. He has heard the pleadings of a father's prayers, and has witnessed a mother's tears for his salvation from his childhood. He has been affectionate in feeling, and amiable in life. He has always resolved that he would, at some future period, attend to the subject of religion. The Spirit has striven with him and he has said, "go thy way for this time." To the urgency of pious friends, he has replied, "wait for a more convenient season." But look at him now. He is pale and emaciated with sickness. He is dying.

"His quivering lip hangs feebly down,
His pulse is faint and slow."

Hark! he faintly speaks! what does he say? Listen! "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." He speaks again; it is in the sad moanings of delirium. He raves of hell and demons and endless wo. Look at his distracted mother. Look at his broken-hearted father. Their son is lost, and they are weeping that he ever was born. He would not heed their prayers; he would not attend to their counsels.

Whose history is this that I am describing? Yours, my young friend. It is this young lady who is in danger of thus dying—it is this young man, who is hastening to this appalling death-bed. Oh! the madness, the inconceivable madness of sin!

Do you see this man who looks so solemn and humble? His countenance is dejected and depressed. He walks as if heavy anxiety preyed upon his heart. What is the matter? He is anxious for his soul. He is an inquirer for salvation. He goes to his pastor, and says, "I feel that I am a lost sinner. I have lived without prayer—I have neglected the Saviour—oh! what shall I do to be saved!" His heart is full. The Holy Spirit has convinced him of sin, and now urges him to surrender himself to God. He hesitates—he loves the world—and the struggle against sin is hard.

Look at him again. The Spirit is grieved away, he is thoughtless as ever. He has forgotten all his fears, and hardly thinks of heaven or of hell.

Follow now this man to his dying hour. The minister of God sits at his bed-side. "Have you any hopes of recovery?" he asks. "No,

sir," says the dying man; "the physician has told me that I cannot live more than a day or two, at most." "Do you feel prepared to die?" "I know I am not a Christian, sir, but I have no feeling upon the subject." "Have you never felt interested in the subject of religion?" "Yes, sir: some years ago, I felt very anxious, but I had not resolution to brave the ridicule of the world, and now it is too late for me to make any efforts." "No, my friend, it is never too late to repent." "Perhaps not, but I feel no disposition to think of the subject; at any rate, I am too weak now to entertain such agitating thoughts."

A few days pass away, and look at him again. He is pallid and lifeless; a stiffened corpse. The shroud is wrapt around him. He is in his coffin. Open the lid. Look at those thin lips, the sunken eye, the emaciated cheek, the cold brow. The day of probation is gone. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he is not saved.

"There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

Fellow immortal, whose history is this? Whose name might be written under this biography? Reader, may it not be yours?

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to ensure the great reward:
And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

How important is this sentiment! How true! We are all familiar with it. Almost every child can repeat it. And yet we live as if death were the time to serve the Lord, the grave the place to ensure the great reward. There is madness in the heart of man.

"Ah! but," says one, "thank the Lord I am safe. I experienced religion ten years ago, and joined the Church. I am a professor of religion. I have nothing to fear. I have the pleasure, while I read, of feeling that this discourse all belongs to my neighbors." "But," God says, "that there are sinners *in Zion* who shall be horribly afraid." There is no earthly sinner, who will more bitterly cry out, in the lamentation of the text, than the unfaithful, insincere professor of religion. While the messengers of God are endeavoring to gather in the harvest and to save immortal souls, he, in fancied security, says, "my soul is already saved. I have already entered the ark. There is nothing for me to do." Sin reigns around him, and he utters no earnest prayers, and makes no Christian effort. The opposers of religion exult in his unfaithful walk, and say religion is but a name. He loves not the society of Christians on earth, and will be repelled from the joys and the anthems of the blest on high.

He dies as he lives, deluded by a false hope. Then he sees his folly. But it is too late. The harvest is past. He cries out in despair. But it is of no avail. The summer is ended. He looks upon the glo-

ries of the heavenly world, beaming in golden splendor in his view. But, oh! the scene only aggravates his wo. He hears the cold repulse, "I know you not." He trembles at his doom, "Depart, ye cursed." As he goes away to the eternal prison, he exclaims, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

Whose history is this? Perhaps every individual who reads or hears this can point to some professing Christian, whose history he fears it will be. But the sincere, humble, prayerful Christian, will apply it to his own heart. With deep emotion he will inquire, "Lord, is it I?" With unfeigned humility he will say, "It would be just if the Lord should leave me thus to perish." With most earnest supplications he will pray, "Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." But the professing Christian who has but a name to live, will say, "These remarks have no application to me; I experienced religion many years since." He will not even ask himself, *now*, if the words of the text have application to him, but *then*, he will utter them in accents of undying despair.

This subject introduces to the reflecting mind, a train of thought the most solemn and impressive. Oh! what is this transient life! It is stealing noiselessly, but most rapidly away! How soon shall we all sleep in death! We now look forward to the dying scene, knowing that it must come; and in a few days it will come. We shall feel that we are dying; we shall go through the scene now shrouded in so much mystery. What, then, will the remembrance of earthly joys or woes avail to us?

How soon shall time sweep away in its wrecks every vestige of our earthly existence—crumbling these houses to the dust—burning up the earth on which we tread—and rolling away the blue firmament which canopies it! Ah! how soon shall we be looking back from the remote periods of eternity, through the long lapse of ages, to the few moments we passed in this rebellious world, in this infancy of our being. Oh! man, man—are you a thinking, rational, immortal being! And can you be regardless of such awful truths? Can you cling to this world, and chain your soul to earth, and clog it with all the vanities of time, when it struggles to be free from such trammels, and soar to its native skies?

Oh! what will touch the heart of man? What will convince him that eternity is worth more than the fleeting moments of life? that the redemption of the soul from endless sin and suffering demands a thought? Oh! God, send, send thy Spirit; interpose in mercy, or he is lost for ever!

Time rolls on! centuries glide away. Ere long, we shall look back from our remote position in the eternal world, as the associates of Noah now look back to the scenes they witnessed while on earth. Think of these spirits now in prison; think what must be their reflections in view of the fact, that they have bartered eternal joy for the sins of a moment on earth. Oh! how must remorse prey upon them as they at

this moment lift up their voices in wo, exclaiming, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

And is it so? Have thousands of years already elapsed, while they still continue the victims of sin? So says unerring truth. They wearied out the long suffering of God, and grieved away his Spirit. And shall eternity still roll on while they remain in their abode of sorrow? Nothing can be more sure. Their own hand has planted thorns in the pillow upon which they will for ever in vain seek repose.

And is this our danger? Are we exposed to so fearful a doom! "Verily," saith the Scripture to us, "unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Yes, very soon the graves, in which our bodies have mouldered to the dust, will disappear under the influence of time. Centuries will pass away, and not an individual shall know our names; not a vestige shall remain of our ever having existed. The world shall be busy; the hum of business and the notes of pleasure shall be heard. The sun shall shine; the rain shall fall; the storm shall rage; but we shall be far, far away; the veteran souls of many centuries. Oh! what is life, when we look forward to explore those regions where we must for ever dwell? What are earth's joys, when we think of heaven's undying glory? What are earth's trials, when we think of banishment eternal from the presence of God? But Heaven's gates are now open wide. Heaven's smiling fields now invite our steps. The angels' cordial welcome now bids us enter. The Father pleads; the Saviour invites; the Spirit strives. Oh! let us all hear, and accept, and live."

NEARNESS OF DEATH.

We sometimes seem to be nearer death than at others, but the whole progress of life is in the closest proximity to it. We are not merely tending towards a brink, over which ultimately, when we arrive at it, we must plunge. Even then, our condition would be fearful. But, in all our progress, we are travelling upon that brink. Our way winds along the perilous edge of the precipice. This makes our condition more fearful—this perpetual insecurity—this ever present and imminent peril. It is not the certainty of the fact in regard to death, that is so very appalling to the soul. It is the uncertainty of the time. It is not that ultimately we *must* die, but that presently we *may*. It is the thought of being always near to that last great evil, always adjacent to the judgment, always close upon the borders of eternity, and always within a little of our everlasting abode—the journey from every point of our path so short, a single stage, a single step! now here and anon there; this hour with men, the next with God. To-day, only a candidate for immortality, to-morrow its incumbent. To-day on trial for eternity, to-morrow, tried, and the case decided irreversibly and for ever. To-day on earth, to-morrow in heaven or in hell—nor yet the interval so great as a day. What a change awaits us both in body and soul! How fearful it would be, even if it were gradually brought about, if, one by one, the objects of earth faded from our view, and the novelties of eternity were slowly and separately unfolded to our vision, and if, one by one, the mysterious ligaments of life were sundered; if the summons of death designated a distant day for our appearance at the bar of God, and our way to it was long and difficult. But how much more fearful, when the change is as sudden as it is great, the familiar scenes of one world all vanishing at once, and the unimagined realities of the other all at once appearing; the summons of death requiring immediate attendance at the bar of God, and the way but a step. And there is no period of life that Death respects, no sanctuary into which he dare not enter, no citadel that he is afraid to attack. Nor will he ever depart from us more than the space of a step, though he may long maintain that distance from us. How solemn, that to-morrow thou mayest have to give account to God for the deeds of to-day; or to-day, for the deeds of yesterday! How many accounts are closed every day! how many cases decided at that court of final judicature! how many characters become unchangeably fixed in righteousness or unrighteousness! How many souls daily go to their last, long abodes! And, as death and judgment are so near, retribution is also at hand. The trial of your case will not occupy much time, and then immediately will ensue retribution. And, if retribution is so near to all, how near is perdition to some! There is but a step between the impenitent and hell! And, for the same reason, is the Christian near heaven! "Your redemption draweth nigh."—Nevins.

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SERMON CCCLXVII.

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WISDOM AND FOLLY.

wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mo—Proverbs, x. 1.

ISDOM and folly, like sweet and bitter, sickness and health, light and ness, are irreconcileable opposites. Wisdom comprehends whatr things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. A son is a young man of correct habits and sound moral and religprinciples. He is temperate, chaste, frugal and industrious. He and reverences his parents, submits himself cheerfully to their auy, treasures up their counsels, consults their wishes, and strives in way to promote their happiness. His talents may, or may not the first order. But he must be amiable, dutiful, affectionate and meable, or he is not a wise son. No intellectual brilliancy or nce can make him so, without the filial virtues. Those children, hose only, make glad parents, who are obedient, sober, conscienand diligent in study or in business—who as they grow in stature ears, grow also in wisdom and in favor with God and man, and fair promise of future usefulness.

t us inquire then why and how it is that a wise son maketh a glad r.

The father of a wise son feels richly rewarded for all the care and se of bringing him up. It may have cost him years of toil and enial. He may have been obliged to "rise early and sit up late," at the bread of carefulness to earn the price of his son's education. owever easy may have been his circumstances, he cannot but have reat solicitude when he saw the dear boy shooting up rapidly into ood, and thought of the thousand temptations to which he would be exposed, and the wayward propensities of the youthful heart, give all these temptations such terrible facilities to beguile and y. Many an anxious hour he must have passed when his child vent from home; perhaps many a sleepless night, when he went boarding school or entered the public seminary. What mighty were then at stake! "O what if my beloved Joseph, now so obe- so affectionate, so promising, so happy, should be snared and by those who lie in wait to destroy? What if his principles should

be debauched and his heart hardened? What if he should become idle and dissipated in his habits, ruin his character and sacrifice his health and lose his soul? How could I survive it?"

Thus has many an anxious father soliloquised, when the great question was considered whether his darling son would "walk with wise men," or with fools, would "enter into the path of the wicked," or walk in the way of the just. And what a relief it is, when a parent finds that his prayers are answered, that his child is safe—that he has chosen virtuous companions—that his good principles and habits are gaining strength—that his letters are full of affection and duty—that his character is delightfully unfolding in the broad sunshine—that he is gaining the confidence of the wise and good—and, in one word, that, having passed through the ordeal, he has come forth as gold.

Now the happy parent forgets all his toils, all his struggles with adverse fortune, and all his anxieties. He feels himself repaid a hundred fold for all that he has done and all that he has felt. The dear image of his child is every day before him, and beams perpetual gladness upon his heart.

2. The father of a wise and virtuous son is happy in the reflection, that should he be taken away suddenly from his family, his place would be in some good measure filled by one so dear to him and to them.

There is no one to whom he can look with so much confidence and satisfaction to be his representative in the dear bereaved circle; for no one but a child can be bound to it by so many endearing ties. And when the anticipated hour of separation comes, with what joy can the dying father say, Behold thy mother—behold thy brother and thy sister!

3. The father of a wise son rejoices in the hope that should he live to need a prop, he shall have a vigorous and willing arm to lean upon, as he goes down into the vale of years. What must be the feelings of a parent, as old age creeps on, and "the grogshop is a curse, and then strong men bow themselves," what must be his emotions when he thinks of a son, once the joy of his heart, but now in the reprobate's grave; or a miserable prodigal, living not to solace him in his declining years, but to "bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!" And so on the other hand, how happy must that father be, who can look to a dutiful and pious child, with a full assurance, that should the time of need ever come, there will be one at least to support his tottering steps and smoothe his passage to the tomb!

4. The father of a wise and virtuous son is exceedingly happy in the prospect of leaving such a representative behind him, to bear up his name and sustain the reputation of his family. This at least is *natural*, and who will say that it is *wrong?* Can it be doubted, that the thought of leaving such a son as Isaac was, gladdened Abraham's heart, when he gave up the ghost and died in "a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people," or that Jacob had a similar feeling, when "he blessed the sons of Joseph, leaning upon the top of his staff!" What a tide of utter desolation must roll over the heart of a dying father, as he looks upon a profligate son, on whom he had once

doated, and realizes that when he is gone the prodigal will be a disgrace to the name he bears and a curse to his family! And so on the other hand, as I have already intimated, how must the heart of any pious father be cheered, who can leave the world with the well grounded hope, that the son of his love will more than fill his place in the church and in the community; and will bear up the honor of his house long after his own departure! If children's children are "a crown of glory" to the patriarch while he lives, how can he help blessing God when he is permitted to indulge the fond hope, that he shall live in a pious and virtuous posterity, long after his body has moulded back to dust?

5. A wise and affectionate son exceedingly gladdens the heart of a pious father, by the promise which his talents and virtues give, that he will become a useful member of society. It is the happiness of some parents, not only to see their children rising to posts of honor and influence, and doing much good in their own life-time, but to leave them still advancing in their bright career. When this is the case he must be more or less than a father, who does not feel the gushings of joy from his own full heart. How delightful must it be, when a young man is advancing successively through the various stages of education, for his father to hear nothing but commendations from his teachers, and to see nothing but what he certainly approves himself! How gratifying to know, that his son is accumulating an ample capital of wisdom and knowledge, to be expended in promoting the temporal and eternal well being of mankind! With what joy does such a father anticipate the time, when his son may put the impress of his wisdom upon the legislation of his country, or interpret her laws from the bench of justice, or guide the youthful mind in her seminaries of learning, or when he may become an able and successful minister of the Gospel at home, or preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ" in a foreign land!

Who can bear to look at the reverse of this bright vision—to think of a father who has done everything to prepare his son for an honorable and useful life, mourning over the wreck of his hopes, and going out of the world with the heart-breaking reflection that the child on whom so much property and so many affections and so many tears have been lavished, is to live after him, if he lives at all, a burning curse to the community, which he was born to adorn and to bless?

6. Every pious parent, in the anxiety which he feels for his child, looks beyond this fleeting and transitory world, and is infinitely more solicitous about his eternal well-being, than about any or all of his temporal interests. To see a beloved child taking the broad way to destruction, the victim of habitual or occasional intemperance; stopping his ears and hardening his heart against the tenderest expostulations—to read the evidence of his midnight revels in his pallid cheek and swollen eyes, and to witness his downward career as he rushes madly on "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," is overwhelming. To see a son of high promise, wallowing in the kennel and ruining all his fair prospects for this world, were there nothing beyond, would be agony almost insupportable to a pious and doating parent. But O the soul

that never dies! O the blackness of darkness for ever! O the worm that never dies! How can a tender father endure the thought, that his child should be ruined for eternity?

Nothing, on the other hand, gives pious parents so much joy, as the developments of virtue and piety in the children of their hopes and their prayers. If such a child is taken away from them in early life, their hearts are comforted with the thought that he is in heaven—that great as the loss is to them, it is gain to him; and that he is gone before them to await their coming, in the world of glory; or if the Christian parent is first called home, as will ordinarily be the case, when he leans his dying head upon the bosom of his child, O how does his heart rejoice in the hope that in a few years at most they shall meet and be for ever with the Lord! Thus in whatever light we view the subject, we see that a wise son maketh a glad father; we see *why* it is that Christian parents rejoice so exceedingly, in the virtues and piety of their children.

But in our text there is a dark as well as a bright side to the picture. If, as we have seen, a wise son maketh a glad father, it is equally true, that *a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*

As folly is everywhere in the book of Proverbs synonymous with wickedness, a foolish son is a young man, who turns a deaf ear to parental counsels, and breaks away from parental restraints—who chooses the idle and the vicious for his associates—yields himself up to the rule of depraved passions and appetites—casts off the fear of God, and cares not whose heart is broken by his waywardness; but is determined to have his own way, and even acts more undutifully than he otherwise would, just to show his independence, and to let the world see that he knows how to take care of himself. In a word, a foolish son is one, in the more desperate cases of prodigality, "whose eye mocketh at his father, and scorneth to obey his mother." In the emphatical language of our text, he is "THE HEAVINESS OF HIS MOTHER." He is a heavy burden upon her heart, which she cannot throw off, and which no one can bear a part of, so as to lighten it. There it is, day and night, evening and morning, pressing her down to the dust. It is not *one* of her great trials, but *the* great trial of her life. A living, corroding, wasting affliction. She could bear sickness, could bear poverty, bear hunger, bear to be turned out by a remorseless creditor into the street,—bear anything—but O, to have her darling son become a prodigal and a reprobate—how can she endure the thought; and yet she can no more drive it from her agonized bosom, than she can annihilate every vestige of consciousness that pertains to her being. O that foolish, that undutiful, that dissipated son, he is the *heaviness of his mother*—yes, of his *mother*, of the friend who has done and suffered more for him than any other friend in the world. It is *heaviness* itself:—not as if some one burden too grievous to be borne were laid upon her, but it is like accumulated and ever accumulating weight of all that is most crushing. Mark the phraseology: *the* heaviness. It is made to stand out, as if no other trial of her life was worthy of being mentioned or thought of. And is there any other like it; any afflic-

tion which so pierces the maternal heart, and leaves it bleeding and festering and aching till the last throb in death? The desertion of a hundred summer-day friends she could sustain—the scorn of a thousand she could bear—under a falling mountain she could sink down and die in peace, and go to her everlasting rest. Here is the burden which her gentle, stricken spirit, cannot bear; but which, unless the prodigal repents, she must carry, heavier and heavier though it be to her dying day.

What were her emotions, when she caught the first smile of her darling boy and clasped him to her bosom? What bright visions of hope flitted across her fond heart, as every day some new beam of intelligence shot forth from his opening mind! When he was perfectly helpless, with what matchless patience and tenderness did she watch over him! When he was sick, with what gentleness did she cradle him in her arms—with what cheerfulness did she deprive herself of rest during many a long and anxious night! When she thought he would die, how would her heart sink within her, and how fervently did she pray that he might be spared! When he recovered, O how did she rejoice over him! He was born, she fondly hoped, for some high purpose, and would be spared to make her heart glad all the days of her life. He was her jewel, perhaps her only jewel; and O how precious in her eyes! When, as years rolled on, and he became the brightest boy in the school and every eye was turned upon him, what a thrill of joy did it carry to her inmost soul; and when he left her for the higher seminary, all ruddy and artless and dutiful, how did her eager hopes run before him, and climb up the steeps which in her fond imagination he was to ascend! She rejoiced, it may be with trembling, but still she rejoiced.

Her recollection of what had befallen other youths equally promising told her, that he was in peril and might fall, but her heart said, No:—it must not, it cannot be. I am sure he loves me. He will not forget my counsels. If temptations assail him, he will remember his mother and put them behind. He will distinguish himself as a scholar. He will gain the confidence of his guardians and teachers. In his usefulness and rising fortunes I shall rejoice. In sickness I shall be comforted by his tender solicitude. In old age I shall lean upon his manly arm. When I die and leave him, he will be a sincere mourner. I shall live in his memory. He will serve God and his generation faithfully. The wicked will shrink away from the sunshine of his example. He will live honorably—he will die happy. Many will rise up and call him blessed, and I shall meet him in Heaven.

But no:—doating mother! This is all a dream. Alas, she wakes up and finds it so, when in one short year, perhaps, the character of her child has undergone a most disastrous change. He is now a foolish, wicked son; she sees it; is obliged to believe it; *realizes* it. O such a heaviness, she never felt before. She cannot describe it, but there it is, pressing upon her heart, and almost to suffocation, and all the sympathy in the world cannot take off the load. She tries to bear up un-

der it; but her heart-strings break—and her own reprobate child, her murderer, wonders what secret and strange disease has destroyed his mother.

Conclusion.—But it is time to draw to a close, and the following are some of the reflections which the subject suggests.

1. What abundant cause have the parents of virtuous and pious children, to lift up their hearts in continual thanksgiving to God! O how rich, how precious the gift! What is wealth, what is honor, what is the highest worldly prosperity, compared with that perennial stream of gladness, which flows into their hearts when they see their sons and daughters "walking in the truth;" "searching for wisdom as for silver, and digging for it as for hid treasure." You may take away everything from such parents—their goods, their lands, their homes—but so long as their children are virtuous and dutiful and of "good report," they are rich; and if pious themselves, will bless God every day, as long as they live, for giving and sparing to them such an offspring. The man who would exchange this treasure for a throne "is a fool."

2. If a wise son is so great a blessing to his father, and if a foolish son is such an insupportable heaviness to his mother, then how aggravated is the guilt, how refined the cruelty of seducing him from the path of virtue? What punishment would not that wretch deserve, who should insinuate himself into the confidence of a happy family, and then, at midnight, steal away the sleeping babe from its mother's bosom and dash it out of the window upon the pavement? But the bereavement would not be half so afflictive as the seduction, which charms the sense and undermines the principles and debauches the heart of a confiding, inexperienced youth, when placed beyond the reach of parental warning and protection. The wily seducer of a sober and piously educated youth, may bear the shape and name of a man, but his relationship is with devils. He may "be transformed into an angel of light," the more surely to accomplish his purpose, but he has the fang of a serpent and the heart of a demon.

3. If a wise and virtuous son is so great a blessing to his parents and family, then too much pains cannot be taken, to imbue the minds of the rising generation everywhere, with that divine love, which is "the fulfilling of the law." Those who fear God, will best discharge all the relative duties of life. Who then can estimate the good that is done, when a promising young man is saved by the vigilance of a companion from falling into the snares which are so artfully set for him by the wicked, or who is rescued from their entanglements and brought back to his father's house? The joy is more than that house can hold. "His feet had well nigh slipped," or he had actually begun to reel along the broad way in company with those who had seduced him from the paths of virtue and peace. But kind and strong hands have delivered him. There is now a bright career of usefulness before him, and who can tell what multitudes may yet rise up and call him blessed?

What more shall I say? Would that I could make every one of the

millions of young men in America hear—especially all the sons of pious parents! To make a kind and affectionate father glad, all the days of his life, by walking in the paths of wisdom and peace, and to pour a tide of perennial joy into the bosom of a doating mother, O what motives to a virtuous and useful life! On the contrary, to dry up the sources of all this gladness and joy, and to pour gall and wormwood through every domestic channel, who can help me to a name for such black ingratitude, such extreme folly and wickedness!

SERMON CCCLXVIII.

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THE GUILT OF CONTINUED IMPENITENCE.

"Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.—Matthew, xi. 21.

THE reason for the wo denounced in the text is given in the preceding verse; "then began he to upbraid the cities wherin most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." The cities referred to were those which lay on the borders of the sea of Tiberias, three of which are named in connection with his denunciations, viz., Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. In these cities a large part of the early ministry of our Lord was spent, and most of his mighty works were done. The Evangelist Matthew is particular in giving an account of the circumstances under which he entered upon his public labors.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As soon as John had retired who was his forerunner, his ministry began. He preached in the same places, that he might follow up the impressions that had been made, and that he might avail himself of the attention which had been awakened. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria." As John wrought no miracle, less interest was felt in his ministry; the signs and wonders which Jesus performed led great multitudes from the adjacent regions to resort to him and he preached the Gospel unto them. These multitudes heard his sermon on the Mount.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to make inquiry in relation to his claims to the Messiahship. In his answer he referred to the miracles he had wrought, as the seal of Heaven to his credentials. After the disciples of John had departed he explained to the great assembly, the nature and design of his mission. He gave him a high character, and to him was committed a peculiar dispensation. He took rank above the ancient prophets. Still he was below the least disciple under the Gospel. The transition from the light and splendor of the reign of Christ to the guilt

of those who rejected it was natural. Many had refused to hear both John and his great Successor. "Then began he to upbraid," to reprove and condemn, "the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done because they repented not." He had not denounced them before. He began his sermon on the Mount by using the language of blessing and encouragement. After faithfully exhibiting the truth and unfolding the way of salvation, when he found that many continued impenitent, shut their eyes upon the light and refused to receive his messages of grace, he exposed their guilt and pronounced upon them, though in tones of compassion, the wrath of God. "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." I know not how their obstinacy and aggravated sin could have been more forcibly expressed.

No reference is had in these tremendous woes to breaches of the moral law, to immoralities, to overt acts of transgression, to violations of the Sabbath, to fraud or violence. The sin laid to their charge was impenitence. They repented not at the preaching of Christ. To make the matter real, let us accompany the Son of God in his tour of benevolence through the cities of Galilee. Taking his sermon on the Mount as a specimen of his preaching, we may see him seated on some declivity, expounding the law of God; exposing the numerous errors incorporated in the traditions of the Elders; teaching its spirituality and extent; showing that it reaches to the motives and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He gives the true meaning and scope. He uses right words, he aims at no rhetorical effect. His Heavenly countenance cannot fail to attract notice and win the heart. His calm dignity and deep seriousness give weight to his instructions, while his simplicity and affection would seem to disarm prejudice. He is intent upon his great errand; he goes from village to village, receiving all who come to him. He appeals to every motive. He shows himself a friend to their temporal interests. He sympathizes in all their afflictions, he heals the sick, relieves the distressed, restores the lunatic and raises the dead. He visits the poor and offers them salvation. He preaches to all. He exhibits the character of God in all its loveliness and glory; he unfolds his purposes of mercy, explains the way of life, and by teaching the relations we sustain, points out the duties binding upon us. His life is an exemplification of his doctrines. He is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. He goes about doing good. A nobleman comes to him in behalf of his son who is dangerously ill—he heals him by a word without even going to his house. A poor widow has an only son, her stay and support, he dies and is carried out of the city for burial; he has compassion on her and raises him to life. These mighty acts give a tone of authority to his words, a degree of interest to his ministry, which no other messenger from God possessed. Never man spake like this man. Multitudes crowd to hear him preach. Adopting the most familiar manner, he invites all to approach him, and if they are in doubt on any point, if any obscurity rests on any subject, he encourages the

fullest inquiry; his dignity is not injured if they arrest his discourse by questions. How can they enjoy greater advantages or be more highly favored? They are exalted to heaven in point of privilege. What is the result of this system of means? What is the effect of these sermons and sabbaths and miracles and labors? With what success is *such* a ministry crowned? Will not *all* obey his precepts and become his disciples? Alas! in the language of the prophet which had reference to his preaching, he is left to exclaim with sorrow on their account, "who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" They repented not. The formalists among them still relied upon their duties, trusted in their own works, and rejected the righteousness of Christ. Merchants and men of business returned to their various pursuits, intent upon gain, deferring serious attention to spiritual matters to a more convenient season. Eternal things did not take deep hold of the heart. Present care and worldly occupations were the substance, the concerns of the soul the shadow. Nothing the great Preacher could say produced alarm, or aroused the conscience. They cared for none of these things. Here and there one of the lower classes turned to the Lord. Often was his benevolent heart affected as he looked around upon the multitudes who in their blindness and unbelief despised their own mercies. He was the only Saviour, he preached the only way of salvation, there was no other name given among men in which they could approach God and live. He knew they must perish if they continued to reject his grace. Again and again therefore did he press them to repent and believe the Gospel. He mingled his tears with his entreaties. The miracles he wrought to remove their doubts and establish his claims were acts of mercy performed towards their friends, but still they would none of his counsels and despised his reproofs. What a contrast would have been presented, if he had gone into the populous cities of Tyre and Sidon! Though the inhabitants were idolators, though ignorant of the true God and given up to luxury and licentiousness, sins which prevail in marts of trade and cities of commerce, still, awed by his miracles, won by his kindness, enlightened by his instructions, they would have humbled themselves in the dust for their sins and turned from their idols to the loving God. It would require but little stretch of the imagination to follow him into the crowded streets and market-places—while thousands gathered around him to witness his mighty works; the whole city would be moved by the appearance and power of the heavenly stranger; the infirm and the aged, the halt and the blind would apply to him for healing—filled with gratitude they would speak in his praise and spread his fame on the wings of the wind. Kings and nobles, rich and poor, young men and maidens would flock to hear his gracious words; public proclamation would be made that all should repent and become his followers. Said Jesus, "if the mighty works which were done in the cities of Galilee had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The voice of lamentation would have been heard in their streets. Our Saviour, from the language he used, evidently had reference to the repentance of Nineveh

under the preaching of Jonah. On another occasion he referred to the preaching and success of the prophet, with a view to show his hearers the hardness of their hearts and the aggravated punishment they would receive for rejecting his truth. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." We might infer, from the astonishing movement of the city when the prophet entered in and delivered his awful message, what would have been the effect of the miracles and preaching of the Son of God. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Great cities are filled with wickedness, and therefore there is less hope of them. "And Jonah," alone and unfriended, "began to enter into the city a day's journey; and he cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robes from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles), saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Who will say that a more powerful influence attended the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh than would have accompanied the mighty works of Christ in Tyre and Sidon? The novelty of the scene, the splendor of the miracles, the authority of the teaching, the character of the preacher, would have aroused and humbled the cities of Phœnicia.

Some have attempted to obscure the meaning and weaken the force of the text by starting difficulties, as, what sort of repentance did our Saviour mean when he said the cities of Tyre and Sidon would have repented? Did he mean external reformation, or inward, sincere and true repentance, and how did the power here ascribed to miracles, agree with what was said in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither would they believe though one rose from the dead? Are miracles sufficient to produce repentance without the special influences of God's spirit? It is a sufficient answer to these and similar speculative questions, that our Saviour used popular language; he intended, in upbraiding these cities for their unbelief, to set their sins in a strong light. They were a stiff-necked people, en-

trenched in self-righteousness. He therefore compared their conduct with that of the greatest sinners then living, the wicked inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. He meant to say that they had steeled their hearts to a greater degree of hardness, and placed themselves farther from the kingdom of heaven, than the heathen who dwelt in those cities.

I. Let us look at the case of those impenitent hearers denounced in the text. The charge is, they *repented not*. The means employed to bring them to repentance were the preaching and miracles of Christ.

It will not be denied that impenitence is a sin; they who have done wrong ought to be sorry for it; they who have broken the law of God ought to confess and forsake their sin. But in this case the sin was aggravated by the privileges enjoyed. The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, but they remained unaffected at the mighty works of a greater than Jonah. They were Jews; to them pertained the giving of the law and the covenants; they had enjoyed a standing revelation; the will of God had been revealed to them; they had been blessed with the ministry of the prophets; they were born and nurtured in the bosom of the Church; they had line upon line, precept upon precept—so clear was the evidence of the divine origin of their religion, so full were their privileges, that it was inquired *what more could have been done for them?* The preaching of Christ was level to their understandings—he sought out acceptable words—he was deeply in earnest, he persevered after they refused to hear. His instructions were not only the best adapted to enlighten, convince and save his hearers, but his mighty works were well suited to give interest and weight to his messages of truth. There could be no more proper way of confirming his testimony, whether we consider the persons he addressed or the doctrines he taught. The Jews were incapable of conviction by another way than by miracle; no other reason would have been apprehended by them, or would have any force upon them. "The Jews," says Paul, "require a sign;" and said our Saviour to them, "except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." And what more proper to establish the great doctrines of the Gospel than the miracles of mercy wrought by the Son of God? To take away all excuse, to overcome their inveterate prejudices, he acted, in all his intercourse with them, with the highest wisdom, his works were done in open day, they were oft-repeated, they were numerous, and bore the stamp of benevolence. Jesus appealed to his good works; after the exercise of ingenuity in trying to evade the evidence, they were constrained to acknowledge the mighty power of God. I see not how more could have been said or done to produce conviction without destroying their free agency. They were left wholly without excuse. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man had done, they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." A miracle is an interposition of divine power either in suspending or counteracting the laws of nature. It is the highest evidence in favor of a commission from God. It is wrought to establish some great truth. Though strongly tempted and fully disposed, they could not deny that notable miracles had been performed by

Jesus Christ. They showed their opposition by ascribing them to Beelzebub. The mission of Moses had been confirmed by miracles; the divine authority of that mission they acknowledged; on what reasonable ground could they reject the claims of Christ, who furnished evidence of the same kind, and much more full and conclusive? The ruler of the Jews evinced his candor and good sense when he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The same sentiment was expressed with great vigor by the man whose eyes Christ had opened. While the Pharisees were disposed to set aside the evidence of such a mighty act, he said, "since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." The Apostle Peter, in attempting to fasten conviction upon the consciences of his hearers, who had rejected and crucified the Son of Man, appealed to his miracles as the strongest evidence of his Messiahship. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The same argument was used with effect in his sermon at Cesarea. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." And yet this word, proclaiming peace and published by Him who was thus anointed with power, the hearers of Jesus rejected. Such was the aggravation of their sin! The wisdom of his words, the greatness, publicity and number of his miracles failed to lead them to repentance.

What were the elements of those feelings which led to such treatment of the Son of God? The history of his ministry will enable us to answer this question.

1. *Self-righteousness* was one cause of their impenitence. When Christ came in the flesh, he found the Jewish people astonishingly ignorant of the law. Its spirituality was covered up under a mass of traditions. Even the teachers seemed not to understand its scope. The circle of religion was so circumscribed that a few vain ceremonies and heartless duties constituted the whole. The confidence of the Scribes and Pharisees in their good estate was in proportion to their destitution of the spirit of grace. A tradition prevailed to this amount, "that if but two men ever enter heaven, one will be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee." Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He taught the spirituality, extent and sanctions of the law; he uncovered the obligations resting upon all men to love God with all their heart and their neighbors as themselves; he exposed the radical defects of mere mo-

rality as a ground of hope; he poured the light of truth upon the dark recesses of the heart, and showed that the whole system of its affections, its imaginations and desires, was only evil continually. He pointed out as clearly the true ground of acceptance, as he did the deficiency of their righteousness. But they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Their ears were closed and their hearts barred against his messages. They compared themselves with themselves, they were ignorant of the true standard of holiness. They would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Their unconcern was voluntary, and so long as they felt not their need of Christ, his preaching was vain, his mighty works only irritated but did not convince.

2. *Pride* was also another source of their impenitence. They boasted of their descent from Abraham; they were vain of their privileges; they looked down upon other nations less highly favored; they called them "dogs." The appearance of Christ, his instructions, were designed to promote humility. The great principle of his Gospel was that no flesh should glory in God's sight. Such a feeling of vain confidence, such a disposition to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, stood directly in the way of his instructions. "How can ye believe," said he, "who receive honor one of another?"

Many were kept in impenitence by *the example of others.* Men of age, wealth and standing, occupying stations of honor and importance, are not aware of the influence they exert, and of the solemn account they must render. The young are swayed by those above them in years; a large portion of every community take their opinions from others. When the claims of Christ were canvassed, and many were disposed to become his followers, the artful enemies of truth met them with the inquiry, "have any of the rulers believed on him?" Surely they must know more than you; but to a thinking mind it were easy to see why they, in their pride, rejected him. They looked upon him as setting up adverse claims.

Others again were so filled with *prejudice*, they could see no excellency in the character, no justice in the claims of Christ. They were displeased with his poverty and humble origin. They looked for a Messiah who should come in splendor, who should affect great political influence and set them free from Roman bondage; but when he appeared in the lowly guise of a carpenter's son, when he retired from the noise and bustle of the world, there was nothing in him to awaken interest. He was despised and rejected of men; they hid, as it were, their faces from him.

In analyzing the feelings and pronouncing upon the motives of those who rejected the ministry of Christ, we have been guided by facts recorded and opinions expressed in the New Testament.

II. We proceed to remark upon *the nature and justice of the sentence* denounced against them. It was in the form of a wo. Those cities, at the time Christ uttered the sentence, were populous and flourishing. Although they heeded not his words, and treated with scorn his denuncia-

tions, the wo cleaved to them like the leprosy, nor could they escape from it. They immediately began to decline in wealth and numbers, and soon dwindled into insignificant villages, nor can even their location now be determined. But while a series of temporal evils was connected with their rejection of Christ and his woes pronounced upon them, the sentence had special reference to the next world. This is evident from the next verse. "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of Judgment than for you." The comparative sins of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and Tyre and Sidon, would then be weighed and ascertained, and a sentence according to truth and equity then be pronounced. Judging from the time and circumstances when the punishment will be fully inflicted, we may conclude that it is not confined to this world, but reaches, and mainly has respect to the next. The wo in the text means the wrath of God in the form of tribulation and anguish upon the soul for ever and ever. This will include separation from heaven, eternal abandonment to remorse of conscience, rage of passion, reproach of devils, and the fire of justice. The place of punishment will be the blackness of darkness; the ministers of vengeance the devil and his angels; the duration, eternal ages. The justice of the sentence is proved by the light and privileges which mark the heinousness of the sin. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Had Christ wrought no miracles, had he merely issued his commands without living among them and exhibiting the loveliness of virtue, their sin had not been so great; but he delivered his messages in person, he spake as one having authority, he had a witness in every man's conscience; he illustrated his own precepts, proved the divinity of his mission by signs and wonders, wrought in the midst of them, under circumstances which admitted of no doubt; and therefore they were without excuse; every mouth will be stopped when the sentence is pronounced, and when it is executed the holy universe will exclaim, "just and true are thy ways, Lord, God Almighty." The men of Nineveh will rise up and condemn them because they repented upon the terror of lighter threatenings and upon the encouragement of weaker hopes. The inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon will meet a milder doom because they never heard Messiah's voice, nor witnessed his mighty works.

It is proper to make a more particular improvement of this subject by applying the principles involved in this case to ourselves.

1. The guilt of impenitence is great in proportion to light and knowledge. Our Saviour instituted a comparison between the cities of Galilee where he had preached and wrought miracles, and Tyre and Sidon who were left in darkness. The former he condemned, on the principle that "where much is given, much will be required." If *they* were guilty because they rejected Christ when he came in the flesh, what shall be said of *us*, who refuse to receive his gospel; "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,

according to his own will ?" If a comparison were instituted between *us* and them who are mentioned in the text, it would not be difficult to show, that *our guilt is greater*, as we enjoy superior advantages. After making due allowance for the unspeakable privilege of sitting under the personal ministry of Christ, and of witnessing his miracles, privileges which took away all excuse for impenitence, we must remember that that was a comparatively dark dispensation. The ministry of John, the forerunner of Christ, was short. The Saviour himself preached but a few years—his labors were divided among many places; his instructions were not then committed to writing; the great body of the Jewish people were prejudiced against him; a profession of discipleship subjected one to persecution and death: these are considerations which are to be weighed when their sins are compared with ours. We have none of their prejudices to encounter, we live in an age of greater light; though we have not the evidence of miracles, yet we have witnessed the fulfilment of prophecy; we have seen the triumph of the Gospel; various systems of philosophy have prevailed, and their inefficacy to reform the world has been proved; false religions have arisen and declined, while the religion of Christ, from actual experiment, is found to be adapted to every age and nation, to man in all circumstances; we live at a time when the superiority of the gospel, to Mahomedanism, to Deism, has been fully shown; we also enjoy the dispensation of the Spirit, and have witnessed numerous extensive revivals of religion. We have the full revelation of the divine will. They of Chorazin and Bethsaida had only the Old Testament Scriptures, obscured by the glossaries of the Rabbins; they knew nothing of the special influences of the spirit. And if they were without excuse, how much more aggravated our sin, how much more fearful our condemnation! We stand nearer heaven than they ever did; from our eminence we can take a wider survey of the works and purposes of God than they; our impenitence, therefore, will occasion a deeper fall and plunge us into a more intolerable perdition. "He that knew his master's will and did it not," especially when the Gospel was the text-book and the Holy Spirit the Teacher, "shall be beaten with many stripes." Who, from any part of the earth, will appear at the judgment, more guilty than we, if then found impenitent?

2. Another truth taught by this discussion, is, that *there will be different degrees of punishment in the next world.*

As Jesus pronounced the tremendous wo upon the cities that repented not at his preaching, he added, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." If the sin of those heathen cities was less, their punishment would be lighter. The chief objection brought by the enemies of truth against the doctrine of future punishment is founded upon the want of distinction in the subject of it. In the zeal of many to prove the *eternity*, they overlook the *degrees* of punishment which the finally impenitent will suffer. Our Saviour was careful to give this truth a prominent place in his instructions. It enters into all his representations of the natural character of man, the

nature of sin, the justice of God and the retributions of eternity. The distinctions made by men who take public opinion for their standard, in the grades of sin, are so unlike the decisions of the Bible that they shrink from the idea of eternal punishment. They take their idea of virtue from utility; while the imagination is filled with frightful images, of "lake of fire," "bottomless pit," "worm that never dies," they are ready to ask will the patriot, the moral man, the kind husband, the affectionate child, be consigned to these dismal abodes? It argues great weakness and blindness to be led away by appeals to our feelings. When the venerable John Jay, the conscientious judge and magistrate, was solicited, as Governor of the State, to grant pardon to a criminal under sentence of death, he replied, "that his compassion might lead him to do it, but his oath required him to be governed by his judgment rather than his feelings." God, in pronouncing sentence upon the impenitent at the last day, will be governed by principles of public justice. His judgment will differ from ours. We are selfish, and are influenced by partial views. The coming of Christ into our world modified the moral government of God. The administration of divine Providence previous to that event was shaped in reference to it. It ante-dated creation, became the starting point of computation for all coming time—the character of men was to be judged of according to their views of Christ and their treatment of his messages. Now it will be seen at once that in the opinions of a world which disregards the Saviour and sees no beauty in his person or value in his work, the sins of unbelief and impenitence, which in the sight of God are the sin of sins, will be considered as trivial; while moral virtues, growing out of temporary relationships and having no direct reference to the glory of God or the good of his kingdom, will be regarded by men as of primary importance. Here is the secret of much of the infidelity that prevails in regard to the great doctrine of future punishment. It is to be feared that nothing but the light of eternity will remove it. The man who trusts to his own righteousness will reject the Saviour, nor can he see how the rejection of his grace will expose him to the wrath of God.

In the context, the inference we have drawn of degrees of punishment in the next world, is more plainly implied. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Capernaum was the city in which Christ dwelt; they saw his perfect example, heard his daily instructions and witnessed some of his most impressive miracles, and yet they repented not. Nothing is said of gross immorality or out-breaking sins. In all probability most of the people were what the world call moral men. Still our Saviour said they should be thrust down to hell. Nor is this all. Sodom was the wickedest city that ever existed; the inhabitants were the most vile in outward conduct; they became a standard of wicked-

ness, so that in all future time, if the worst representations were to be made or the most infamous character was to be given, it would be said, "as wicked as Sodom;" that would be the climax of depravity, and Jesus Christ, who is to be the judge of the world, said, the men of Capernaum would meet a heavier doom in the judgment than they. And if we were now to explore the dark dismal regions of hell, we should find the hearers of Christ in the cities of Galilee, who repented not, lower in the depths of wretchedness and on the scale of suffering than the men of Sodom, and lower still should we find the impenitent who have gone from this place.

3. If many rejected Christ in the days of his personal ministry, though he spake as never man spake, and did so many wonderful works, we must consider it no strange thing if men *now* reject his ministry. The prophet Isaiah predicted his small success when he said, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" On some occasions his hearers rudely interrupted him; on others they evinced the most marked contempt and opposition. Although crowds were attracted to hear him by his miracles yet they could not endure his doctrines; when he told them that religion was something more than a form; that morality was an insufficient ground of hope; that they must be born again and live a life of faith, feeding, in a spiritual sense, upon his flesh; that they must become one with h m, they said, "this is a hard saying, who can hear it?" And they turned away. After his arduous labors in the cities of Galilee, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, he gathered but few disciples; the great mass remained unaffected; and when he had finished his ministry, all his disciples in Jerusalem and who had followed him from other places, were so few that they could be accommodated in an upper chamber. Paul says, that he was seen after the resurrection of "above five hundred brethren at once." It is true the promise and the gift of his Spirit encourage his ministers to expect greater success; and numerous conversions have taken place under the preaching of the gospel; but men are no better disposed to receive the truth, than they were in the days of Christ. We find the same inattention to divine things, the same disposition to trust in their own righteousness, the same spirit of procrastination.

4. The example of Christ in the text, teaches us, that we must expose the sins of men, if they will not repent. Having made his circuit of the cities of Galilee, pressing them with arguments, working miracles for their conviction and offering them salvation, while they repented not, he began to change his tone, he reproved and condemned them. He preached peace, and they believed not; he then pointed them to the gathering storm of divine indignation. It is often asked of what use is denunciatory preaching? why deal in terrors? It is said that the heart that is barred against mercy will only resist the harsh tones of wrath. In answer it may be remarked, the denunciations of Jonah brought the city of Nineveh to repentance. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," says an apostle, "we persuade men." Although the

preaching of the law will not change the heart, it will show men the necessity of it. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Benevolence, therefore, prompts to an exhibition of the wrath of God. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he pronounced her doom. Who can tell how many who have read the awful sentence traced with the Saviour's tears, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate, and the things that belong unto thy peace are for ever hidden from thine eyes," may have taken the alarm and fled to the refuge of the gospel? And it will be well if the words of Christ in the text, setting forth the aggravated sin and punishment of the cities of Galilee, arouse the guilty in this congregation to flee from the wrath to come. God may bear with you, the light of the Sabbath may still shine upon you, overtures of mercy may be presented, but if you put off repentance and sin against truth and love, you must lie down in deeper sorrow than the Jews who heard Christ.

Finally.—This discussion teaches us *the great danger of continuing to reject the Gospel.* When Christ went through these cities, his preaching and miracles must have awakened deep interest; but they who remained impenitent, becoming familiar with these solemn scenes, were less disposed to renounce their sins; their fears gradually subsided, till the mighty works of the Son of God only hardened them in unbelief. It is a law applicable as well to our moral as to our physical nature, that powerful stimulants oft-repeated lose their effect. The men of Galilee had heard and seen enough to move the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and yet they repented not. It is dangerous to trifle with serious things. If we do not yield to first impressions of the truth, a habit of indifference is contracted; and it is like attempting to wash out the leopard's spots, to break up such apathy. In the conversion of sinners the Holy Spirit moves in a line with nature. God works by means; and novelty is one of the most powerful. To the heathen everything is new in the religion of Christ. Its great truths strike the mind with force; its awful scenes kindle the imagination; its simple worship affects the heart; but to *us* who have long been accustomed to these things, they have comparatively little interest. To *us* no *new* truths will be revealed, nor any new form of the *old.* The regularity with which the Sabbath returns, the uniformity of the services of the sanctuary, serve to weaken the impression, and diminish the prospect of salvation. Let the impenitent think of this; what is to arouse you? You hear the same voice, the discussion of familiar topics; were we to go to the destitute heathen, they would hear. There are those here, who have heard enough to convert half the heathen world; every Sabbath's delay is like rolling another stone to the mouth of the sepulchre, which will increase the difficulty of rising to newness of life.

THE FAMILY REVIVAL.

THE family, whose condition I am to describe, is a representative of thousands in our churches, who are living in the full enjoyment of the highest Christian privileges. The father is actively engaged in the business of life. The pursuits of the world engross his chief care, from day to day. Yet, he is a Christian. He maintains, in his general intercourse with his fellow-men, a character consistent with his religious profession. In his household arrangements, all the forms and appearances of Christian worship are daily observed. The morning calls the inmates of the dwelling to the family altar. The Scriptures are read, and perhaps a hymn is sung. The prayer is offered: but when the circle are dispersed, it is at once evident that the exercise has made no strong impression.

The duties at home, the business abroad, and the pleasures of life, engage the attention of the various members of the household. It is *not* the *great object* of this family *to glorify God*. The parents are real Christians; but their affections have wandered from God, and are too much set upon this world. Their children are not interested in the great salvation, and their parents are so much devoted to their mental improvement and social accomplishments, as to feel too little that the claims of God and his kingdom are paramount to everything else. They would shudder at the thought of saying that religion is not the great concern; and in their daily prayers they always offer the supplication, that they may have *first* an interest in the kingdom of God. But the children and the domestics see, from the yielding current of *their life*, that Christian duty is not unfrequently made to compromise with the customs of the world. Thus they go on, from time to time, their offspring growing up in impenitence. Their dwelling is not illuminated by the cheering light of the Saviour's face. The altar is there, but its fire is dim. The sacrifice is offered, but the lamb has a blemish. "Holiness to the Lord" is not legible on the walls of their tabernacle, and upon all its furniture. And the stranger "in their gates" would scarcely infer that their house is the Lord's, and all that appertains to it, consecrated to his service.

But He, who loves his people, will not suffer them to go on, satisfying themselves with the cup of emptiness. He sends an affliction, to recall their affections to him. Sickness falls upon a child. Their loved one suffers, and the whole circle sympathize with it. The parents think of their past course. They call to mind what God has done for them, and what they have been doing in *his* cause. They feel convinced that a cold and worldly spirit has damped the ardor of piety, and that their lives have been barren and unfruitful. They plead for the recovery of their child, and they confess the guilt of their own backsliding. Their hearts are softened. They weep and pray. They return to God, and God returns to them.

Now, the spirit which reigns in their dwelling is changed. The worldly visitor does not come. *Their minister*, and their most *devoted Christian friends*, renew their visits, and the house of affliction becomes the place where God is acknowledged, and sought, and honored.

How altered is the family prayer! No heartless formality now. It comes from stricken hearts. A father's and a mother's tenderest sympathies are touched, and an avenue is opened into their bosoms, through which the good Shepherd can communicate the richest of his spiritual blessings.

Morning and evening the word of truth is read, and regarded with far different feelings. It is seen and *felt* to be the bread of life to *their* souls, as well as to the sick sufferer's, whose days are apparently numbered. The parents think their child must die. They know, that if unrenewed, the soul must be lost! They cry to God. Faithfully now, if never before, they warn the child they love, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and in no other name can one hope for salvation. The truth reaches the heart, with an emphasis never felt before. And the reason is, it *comes from the heart.* A father's and a mother's bosom bleed at the withering prospect of giving back thus to its Maker, the immortal spirit which had been entrusted to their care, with this injunction: "Take this, and train it up *for me.*" They have not done it. Parental affection is almost agonized at the recollection of past neglect, and the dreadful anticipation of the grave, over which they must ever weep with hopeless grief.

But God in tender mercy hears the cry of his chosen. God is a Father, and he pities a parent. He averts the dreadful stroke. He spares the child. And the hearts of Christian parents are melted and subdued by gratitude. If anything can reach them, this will.

But, what is the effect of such a visitation upon the household who receive it? Religion resumes the place in that habitation, from which she was removed. Enter the dwelling,—you cannot fail to see her there. She is conspicuous from morning to night. If business calls, it does not call away from her. Her light is in the path. Her shield protects, and her smiles cheer and bless. In that family now, she in reality presides. At the altar, her mantle falls on every sincere worshipper. The blessing invoked at the table, is not an unmeaning formality. The words that are uttered, are felt in the heart. At the fireside her presence is acknowledged; and if the stranger enters their gates, he finds that Israel's God is there. In short, the *spirit of religion* in that family, is revived. The sick one slowly recovers; and were it not for the uncertainty of a sick-bed repentance, there would be hope that the sufferer had found, in the sickness of body, the life of the soul. Others in the household, brothers, sisters or domestics, have sympathized in the sorrow, have seen religion restored to her throne in the heart, have listened to the counsel which now has been given them, and have profited by the prayers offered up in their behalf.

They have repented, and embraced the Saviour; and it might be

literally said of the fruits of this affliction, as of the restoration of Dorcas, 'many believed in the Lord.'

Now this is, strictly speaking, a family revival of religion. And such is the kind of revival that we most need.

The arrangement of Providence which divides the many millions of the human race into the various family circles, which go to make up the great aggregate of human society, furnishes the clue to the most powerful causes which can be brought to bear upon the moral and social improvement of man.

Here, we apprehend, is the basis, on which the universal spread of the Gospel must be laid. It is to carry *home* to the fireside, to the social and endearing influences of domestic life, a more constant, uniform and affectionate interest in the salvation of every individual embraced in the family circle. *Let us begin at home.*

Suppose every Christian in the world should engage heartily in duty, with the impression that the little circle with which he is associated in daily intercourse, constitutes the appropriate part of the vineyard for his culture. As he cannot by any possible means, reach the thousands and the millions who are removed beyond the sphere of his personal influence, let him remember that God designs him more especially to labor for those whom he *can reach.* In this way, every portion of the soil will have its cultivators, and no part of the vineyard be neglected. But when it seems to the Christian that he can act for God, anywhere but *at home,* when his Christian neighbor feels so too, and all the church with which he is connected, sympathize in the almost universal reluctance, to act immediately for the friends among whom God has placed them, the *whole ground* is more or less neglected. Each looks away from his *own,* while it is utterly impossible that he can properly attend, and do justice, to another's.

It is probable, there is scarcely a Christian family in the land, that does not embrace some two, three, or half a dozen who are living in impenitence and sin. Were they the especial objects of the prayers, the efforts, and the Christian counsels of those with whom their lot is cast, how would it tell upon the increase of the churches, throughout our country! Parents, children and domestics would come under the tender and constant influence of Christian intercourse, made more intimate and impressive from those endearing sensibilities with which social life invests it."

PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

"THIS must be *professed* as well as real subjection to the Gospel. It is 'with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness:' it is 'with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation.' Some persons act precisely as if the latter part of this declaration were an interpolation. But it is not. To *be* disciples of Jesus Christ, and to *declare* ourselves his disciples, the two constitute our duty. Neither part may be dispensed with. Words and actions are intended to confirm each other. It is true that actions speak louder than words, but the harmony of both is an utterance louder still. Let those who hesitate respecting the obligation of a public profession of religion, read what Christ, in the Gospel, says respecting those who 'confess' and 'deny' him 'before men.' Did he mean nothing by such language? Nothing? But, say some, 'if we obey Christ's commands, will not our actions declare unequivocally what we are? If our subjection to the Gospel be real, will it not of necessity be sufficiently manifest?' But how is a person to obey all the commands of Christ, without a distinct and open confession of him, when one class of these commands requires such confession? To obey in part only, is not having 'respect unto all his commandments.'

"A profession of Christianity is never complete, unless it be made both by *works* and by *words*. Without the former, it is the merest pretence—without the latter, it is materially defective, perhaps essentially so. I advise no man to try eternity without both a real and professed subjection to Jesus Christ. When you appear before him as your judge, you will not like to have it in remembrance that you had not been known on earth as his disciple, never numbered among his friends; that you never, by any voluntary and public act, connected yourself with his Church; never entered into communion with his disciples; that you never met with them to pray and to sing a hymn to Christ as God, as Pliny says the primitive Christians did; that you separated the sacraments, which God hath joined together, and were satisfied with a covenant sealed with only one seal, and that affixed by your parents in your unconscious infancy.

"It is true that some do not profess religion, because they have it not to profess. This is melancholy. But, to have religion and conceal it—to attempt to get to heaven by stealth, and defraud Christ of the public honors of our allegiance and salvation here, is mean—is perilous."—*Nevins.*

DEATH.

"THE prospect of death discloses things to us, which, through life, we see not, or are inattentive to. The foolish virgins, not till the coming of the bridegroom, found out that they had no oil; or, if they knew it, they regarded it not.

"The most careless through life often express great concern when life is closing.

"That man, who has never quaked at thoughts of death, is not fit to die; and he, who has never trembled at the prospect of meeting God, is not prepared to meet him; and he, that has never stood in awful apprehension of the retribution that awaits the guilty, is full likely to realize its horrors.

"Of some men whom I have known, and who intended, by and by, to come to Christ, and who are now in eternity, this is the history. One died without being sick. Another was sick *here*, in the brain. A third in his sickness still put it off. A fourth spoke of a callousness that had come over his heart, by reason of which he could not feel. A fifth hastily ran into a refuge of lies. A sixth found he had quenched and put out the last spark of the Spirit. He had ceased to strive. He called and cried in vain—God let him alone. He found, too late, that He was a being not to be trifled with. That was fulfilled in his case—'I will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.'

"How oft there is not only no twilight to the evening of life, but no evening; nor yet the noon reached, nor even the morning sun high in the heavens! And how oft there is no premonition, but death intrudes into the midst of life, and not gradually withereth the flower but rudely and suddenly severs its stem!

"What a change is wrought in death! It is a very awful thing, even to die in the Lord. Remember this, Christian! In the morning thou art here, panting, laboring, dying—and before it is night on earth, thou art in distant Paradise, breathing its air and partaking in its delights—from this sphere and these revolutions, removed in a twinkling, where there is no need of sun or moon, but the living light of the divine glory illumines all. Now thou art with thy earthly friends and acquaintance, and anon with Christ, and one in the General Assembly and Church of the First-born—this hour taking drinks and medicines from a nurse's hand, and a few hours afterwards it is given thee to drink of living waters, and to eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. The poor malefactor, who came out of his prison to be crucified with Christ, as forlorn and hopeless a creature as lived, before the even lights were kindled in Jerusalem, was a sanctified and saved spirit, in the happy society of saints and angels. What a change for this poor fellow! And, to every one that trusts in Jesus, it shall be in like manner.

"There is a sense in which Jesus Christ, and the Spirits around his throne, have no sympathy with us in our lamentations over the pious dead. They *rejoice* at meeting one who has accomplished his warfare, and overcome through the blood of the Lamb."

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SERMON CCCLXIX.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD,

NEW YORK.

THE SOCIAL PRAYER-MEETING.

"Again I say unto you,—That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—Mat. xviii. 19, 20.

In the hour of distress we naturally seek relief. The least we can do is to ask help of any who have the means of giving us aid. If God only can relieve us, the same feeling prompts us to ask or seek his assistance;—to present ourselves before the mercy-seat of an all-hearing God, and humbly request him to consider our case, and give us help in our time of need.

To pray, therefore, is but to act in accordance with the unconstrained operations of our sinful and needy souls; it is but to deal with God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, as with those of our fellow-beings on whom we are dependent. It is more incumbent, then, on those who deny the propriety and usefulness of prayer, to show why we should not pray, than for us who maintain the duty to show why men ought always to pray and not to faint.

Mutual wants and common griefs prompt to the union of the needy and sorrowing in drawing nigh to God. All human experience testifies that it is not enough to pray alone. "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying,—Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord of hosts; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." The prophet in this passage does but express what has a thousand times taken place in every age of the Church. But why this desire for the presence and agreement of others—of many others, in the presentation of prayer? Why not each for himself be content to pray at home, and in the secret place where none but God can hear?

That mankind have ever felt that secret supplication, intercession, and giving of thanks, though indispensable alike to piety and its cultivation, are not enough, and that peculiar advantages attend the offering of united prayer, is clearly to be seen in their practice. There never

has been a time, since the Almighty said,—"It is not good that the man should be alone," when social prayer has not been addressed to the Most High,—a time, when men have not been wont to come one to another, and say,—"Let us go to pray before the Lord of hosts."

Social prayer, therefore, as well as the lone prayer of the closet, it will be seen, is one of the promptings of human nature; felt, as all history teaches, in all climes, kindreds and generations. To neglect, withhold, and restrain such prayer, is to act contrary to the convictions,—the sober, long-cherished and fully-established convictions,—of every age, and of all the world.

To these convictions the Saviour of the world affixed his seal. He himself prayed both in secret and in company with others. What he encouraged and commended by his example, he also enforced with exhortations and promises. More explicit, unequivocal, and positive promises, cannot be framed than those which fell from his lips in relation to prayer. "Pray to thy Father, and thy Father shall reward thee openly." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

All these declarations of the Son of God are plain and direct. Whatever else they do or do not teach, of one thing they assure us beyond all question,—God will hear and answer when we pray; we never pray in vain. Doubt anything else sooner than this. Deny every other doctrine of the Bible, or admit this; for no other is more abundantly confirmed. Question your own humanity, your own natural affection, sooner;—"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Such an appeal should silence every doubt.

It was thus that he, who "is in the bosom of the Father," discoursed of prayer. And what he taught he practised:—

> "Cold mountains, and the midnight air,
> Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."

Much of what he said in relation to this exercise related, no doubt, to secret prayer—the praying of an individual by himself. But no small part of it, especially those promises that are recorded by the beloved John, has an obvious reference to united, social, public prayer. Such

is the reference, it will be seen, in the text:—"If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask."

The language of the text is worthy of special consideration. It presents an additional feature in respect to prayer,—a new fact, a particular promise. The Saviour had already, in the plainest terms and most explicit manner possible, reiterated, confirmed and established the ancient promises which had served, in former days, as the basis of the believer's faith in prayer. The disciples, therefore, needed not any additional assurance that their individual prayers would be heard in heaven and avail with God. On this point no room for doubt was left. They needed, however, an additional lesson in the doctrine of prayer.

Advancing from his former position, the great Teacher now takes still higher ground. He proceeds to inform them of the peculiar efficacy of union in prayer; to teach them that the united prayer of any two of them has an efficacy much superior to that of the lone prayer of any one of them; that such a presentation of united desire has, not only the combined power that each suppliant would have with God, if he prayed alone, but an additional and peculiar power resulting from this very combination of hearts in the utterance of the same request. Just as there is greater power in a heap of living coals, than in the sum of the whole when each is detached from the other.

Nor is this additional feature of the doctrine removed or impaired by insisting, as many do, that the language of the Saviour in this passage is to be referred and limited to the twelve and to their ecclesiastical canons, sanctions and censures. Even in this restricted application of the words,—an application derived more from the juxta-position of the text, than from the declaration itself, which seems to include a general principle of the divine procedure,—it is yet most clearly taught, that the united prayer of any two of the twelve would have an efficacy greater than the sum of the efficacy of the prayer of each if offered separately. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight," except on this principle?

The doctrine, therefore, that is taught in these words of our Lord, is plainly this:—*That any number of praying souls, two or more, have much greater reason to expect success when they pray together than when they pray for the same thing separately.* Blessed promises, "exceedingly great and precious," are, it is true, addressed to those who pray in secret; but greater and more glorious results may be expected from the social offering of prayer by any two or more of the disciples of Christ. This is the grand truth which, in this discourse, it is proposed to illustrate and commend.

The particular reason presented by our Saviour for this superior efficacy of social prayer is to this effect:—"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them." Such a meeting, for such a purpose, is sure to attract the presence, the sympathy, and co-operation of the great Redeemer himself;—sure to interest him in the matter prayed for, and to secure his joint-intercession for the desired blessing. When Jesus himself makes one of the

praying company, as he often did when on earth,—when he, who "ever liveth to make intercession for them" who love him, mingles his supplications with the petitions of any twain of us,—when he bows down, as it were, with us at the mercy-seat,—what wonder is it, that the thing for which we ask is done for us of our Father in heaven?

It may now be seen on which principle it is that social prayer has a peculiar efficacy above secret prayer; not indeed where the latter is neglected; but when we go from the latter to the former; when, having offered in its season the sacrifice of the closet, we go, still breathing the atmosphere that we have inhaled by communing with God in secret, to the place where prayer—united prayer—is "wont to be made." Thus we gather to ourselves the aid of as many as come together, each privileged for himself to plead all the promises, and throwing all their resources into a common fund with which to effect their desired object; and not only their aid, but the presence, countenance, support, and joint-intercession of one who is "worth ten thousand of us," and "ten thousand times ten thousand,"—one who alone and infinitely is worthy,—one who can never pray in vain,—one who has only to ask and the treasure-house of heaven is thrown open to him. "Thinkest thou," said he to his disciples, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Yes, in a peculiar manner, and as he is not with the secret suppliant, Christ is present and mingles with an assembly of his disciples, however small; be they but two in number, the least that can constitute an assembly. This, his peculiar presence, sanctifies both the altar and the gift,—the place of prayer and the prayer itself. For, when thus present, it is not in the character of an unconcerned spectator, or merely of a sympathizing friend; but, as the most concerned and interested of the company, to lead them, as he was wont to do when in the body, to the throne of the heavenly grace, to the mercy-seat, and to him that "sitteth between the cherubims," and to offer for them "the effectual fervent prayer" of him who alone is righteous. It cannot but be, therefore, that peculiar efficacy should pertain to the prayer which proceeds, at one time and place, from the hearts and lips of the people of God.

In further illustration of this fact, appeal may be made

I. *To the prevalence of social prayer among men.*

It has already been observed that social prayer has, in every age, been the resort, in time of need, of our sinful and perishing race. Wherever God has been known and worshipped, united prayer has constituted a part—a principal part—of that worship. Where, too, in their blindness and folly, men have "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator," where they have "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things"—to these their idols they have appealed

for help with all the supposed power of union in prayer. The conviction of the world has ever been, that such prayer, not only is a proper way in which to worship the Creator, but has a remarkable superiority over prayer in secret.

Whether this universal fact may be regarded as the result of an original dictate of man's nature—of a feeling growing out of his original constitution,—or as the consequence of an early revelation of the divine will preserved by a common tradition among all nations,—it shows beyond a question that the experience of every age and generation has confirmed the position that social prayer has a value peculiar to itself; that there are blessings, the bestowment of which can be secured in this and in no other way, or better thus than by other means.

The appeal may also be made

II. *To the experience of those who neglect social prayer.*

It is in accordance with invariable experience, that in order to preserve the power of religion the form thereof must be sustained. The form, it is true, may and often does exist without the power; but the power is never found without "the form of godliness." Consequently, whenever men have neglected and abandoned the practice of social prayer, their religion has first degenerated, and then dwindled away, until it ceased to have even

"A local habitation and a name."

This fact is particularly observable in communities of small extent, such as are found in towns and villages. Let the practice, in any such community, of assembling together for united prayer be for any cause suspended, and at length entirely discontinued for years and generations, and it is no difficult thing to foretell the consequences to the religion and morals of that community. Sad and deplorable evidences enough can be found, that in such cases, with the neglect of social prayer, religion has departed, errors of the most glaring and disastrous character have crept in and stalk abroad at noon day, while vice grows up and flourishes like weeds in the garden of the sluggard.

All this we know to have resulted from the neglect of what is called *public prayer or worship*, which is social prayer in its most enlarged form. Similar consequences flow, as might be shown, from the neglect of *household* prayer, in which the social character is still retained, but in a limited form.

There is, however, another form of social prayer, occupying a middle ground between public and household prayer, neither so restricted as the one, nor so extended as the other;—a form which is ordinarily distinguished as social prayer. An assemblage for such a purpose is, by way of farther distinction, commonly called a *prayer-meeting*. Such assemblages are not confined to the Lord's day, as those for public worship ordinarily are; nor are they held only in the sanctuary. The whole, or a part of a church, or neighborhood, may come together, in any convenient place,—a lecture-room, a vestry, a parlor, a cabin, or

"an upper chamber,"—on any day or evening of the week, for the avowed purpose of continuing an hour or two in united prayer. So did they in the days of the Apostles, and so were they assembled, some of the early Christians, on the memorable occasion of Peter's deliverance from the prison and the sword.

To such meetings the language of the text has a most manifest and particular application, as may be seen from the sad experience of those churches and Christians who are strangers to such meetings. Show me a church of any name, in any part of the world, who have always, or for many years, contented themselves with the assembling of themselves together for public worship once or twice on the Lord's day; who are never seen at other times gathering to their solemn meeting; who never, when two or three have come together, bow themselves down at the mercy-seat; who are never heard presenting the voice of united prayer in social circles;—and I will show you a church where revivals of religion are unknown and undesired; where individual cases of conversion seldom or never occur; where the waters of life stagnate; where the fire on the altar is almost quenched; where the heavens are brass and the earth iron; a church, whose dwelling-place is in the top of Gilboa, or on "a heath in the desert;" and who can scarcely be distinguished from the very lovers of this world.

Or, if such churches cannot be found, show me a church among whom one or more weekly meetings for prayer have been set up, either for males or females, or both; but where not one in ten or twenty of their number is ever seen in the place of prayer; and of those who come, a large part, perhaps, are occasional visitants; where but few and infrequent means are used to induce the church to attend, or if used are ineffectual; where prayer-meetings are set up only to languish and die;—and I need not tell you what is the spiritual state and prospects of that people; you know already. There the ambassador of Christ, if he be what a herald of the cross ever should be, is often heard to cry—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It would be presumptuous in the extreme to expect to find a revival of religion or a refreshing from the presence of the Lord in such a church. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" So uniform are these consequences, that the prayer-meeting is ordinarily regarded as the spiritual thermometer of the church.

Once more: take the case of an individual who is connected with the Church, and dwells among a people where such means of grace are afforded him, but who, though frequently invited and urged to associate in such exercises with "the praying few," finds neither time nor inclination to be present and participate in the duties and privileges of such an occasion. Such a Christian professor may possibly be found among them whom I now address. Yes—I have one even now in my eye. "Thou art the man!" Let me ask thee, why is it that thou canst never find time for the weekly exercise of social prayer? How is it that the appointed season always finds thee so busily occupied with other concerns? When have I seen thee in a prayer-

meeting? Alas! it is, "long—long ago!" Seldom hast thou ever been heard to open thy lips in prayer. And what now is the character of thy religion? what the state of thy heart? Shall I tear away the veil that hides it from the eyes of mortals? Shall I penetrate its dark chambers, explore its deep and gloomy recesses, and draw a picture of its wretched condition? This would but expose you before the world, and I am loth to do it. God knows it all, and not a little of it thou knowest thyself. Thou knowest full well that it is by no means with thee as in months and years that are past. With thyself and with thy God I leave thee.

But let me ask, did ever a Christian become at all distinguished for piety, who had no place, nor desire for a place, in the social praying circle? Show me the man. I have never seen him. Or is there one whom I now address, who walks with God daily, and always, or for the most part, has delightful fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ—one who is growing in grace and ripening for heaven, who, at the same time, never or seldom accompanies his Redeemer, nor desires to accompany him, to the place where two or more are met together in the name of Christ for united prayer? But why do I ask? How vain the thought! Who for one moment would undertake, or think of, such a fruitless search?

Let me, however, direct attention to yet another class. There are those, perhaps, who now hear me, to whom this subject has brought many painful recollections. You were once among the number who came to the place of prayer, bowed down with the lowly band before the throne of grace, lifted up your voices in the midst of your brethren and sisters, and poured out your hearts in fervent supplication unto him who heareth prayer. For a season you, too, "did run well." But that season was short. Months have passed away, and we have looked for you at the appointed time and place, but you were not to be seen. Surely, we have said, after such an appeal as he heard on the Sabbath, after so much entreaty and urgency on the part of the pastor, surely he will come this evening. But the evening came, and our hearts sunk within us when we found that your place was still vacant; that you could not be seen even lingering about the door. Need I call you by name? Not at all; it is well known. The eyes of your brethren and sisters are on you; and what is more, the all-seeing eye is also on you. Your God and Saviour too has looked for you, and you came not. When our hearts have felt his presence, and overflowed with streams of bliss, we have wished for you, but wished in vain.

And now suffer me to ask—not what has prevented your attendance, and repressed your desire—but is it better with you, than when you would sooner offend all your kindred than fail to keep your engagement with the Saviour at the hour and place for the weekly prayer-meeting? better than when you would as soon make an engagement for worldly business or pleasure on the Lord's Day, as on the evening consecrated to social prayer? Better? Alas! how art thou fallen! scarcely canst

thou recognize thy former self. Is this he who once so breathed the atmosphere of Heaven in his interviews with God, that his very countenance shone as he came down from the mount, and his garments were filled with the rich perfume?

> "When one, that holds communion with the skies,
> Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
> And once more mingles with us, meaner things,
> 'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings:
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

So was it with thee, poor wanderer! Such was the fragrance of those happy seasons when the world was far away, and heaven was brought down to the earth. But what a mere skeleton hast thou now become! What an image art thou of living death! "How is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" Would that I could persuade thee to come and, like the prodigal, deplore thy folly in leaving thy Father's house! Why longer stay away to starve and perish! Believe me, thou canst never thrive on husks; canst never again experience the bliss of former days, until thy feet are once more led, with a longing heart, to the place where Jesus is—the place where he makes one of a praying circle in mutual sympathy and intercession.

Bear with me, if I seem to be urgent. "The love of Christ constraineth" me. I am in earnest. I am distressed for you who are impoverishing your souls. I am anxious—greatly anxious—that it should be with each of you as once it was. I have one request to make of you. Will you not grant it? It will cost you nothing. You can comply, I doubt not, if you will. Your brethren and sisters—a few of them at least—are wont to meet at a specified hour and place every week, to pray for the out-pouring of the spirit and the prosperity of Zion. Will each of you be present, God willing, at the next meeting? The Master has said—"where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Christ will be there, for he will keep his word for ever. Will you be there?—No? can you say it? Not even to meet Christ there? Not even to honor him with your presence? Not even to obtain of him the desire of your heart?

What aileth thee, friend? Must Jesus stand begging with thee, day after day, and be denied after all? Dost thou believe or not what he tells thee in the text? If thou dost not believe his word, what dost thou but give him the lie? Thou makest thy God a liar! Either thou dost not believe that Christ will be present in deed and in truth, or dost not care for his company. If thou lovest him, then to be where he is,

> "Is sweeter than ten thousand days
> Of pleasurable sin."

Then if thou dost believe his word, thou canst not stay away. Everything will be laid aside, and time redeemed, to have such an interview

with Christ. If it be, however, thy choice to stay away, then say not —"Lord!—thou knowest that I love thee."

But we may appeal also, and with great confidence,

III. *To their experience who faithfully improve their opportunities of Social Prayer.*

That the Saviour himself delighted in this heavenly exercise can be doubted not at all. He and his disciples, with others of a kindred spirit, often had their prayer-meetings. Frequently when two or three of those who loved him, trusting in the memorable words of the text, had met together, and were seeking the consolation of Israel, the Lord, whom they sought, would suddenly and unexpectedly come in, and, bowing down with them at the mercy-seat, give an inexpressible interest to their meeting.

At times he would take two or three of them aside from the rest, and when by themselves engage with them in exercises of devotion. On one occasion he expressed, to Peter and James and John, his desire for their company and participation in this heavenly privilege. He would go forth to a retired spot and pray; and these his bosom-friends he would have with him. They arrive at the place, sequestered from the observation of the world, and shut in by the covert, perhaps, of a grateful grove of olives. There, on the mountain-side, they bow down together, and Jesus prays. The longer he continues in the delightful employment, the more he seems to partake of the spirit, and to breathe the atmosphere of heaven; so much so, that presently his whole form becomes radiant with the light of the upper world, and heaven is brought down to the earth. And with the light of heaven came two of its glorified inhabitants;—Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the great prophet of Israel. It seemed but a step that day from earth to heaven. Had Jacob been there, he would have exclaimed, as with far less reason at Bethel—"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." As it was, however—such was the inspiration of the occasion, Peter said to his Saviour—"Lord! it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles."

Yes, it is good to be where Christ is, and in the praying circle. Experience is the best evidence. Taste and see. Ask them who have put the social prayer-meeting to the proof, and they can tell. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Our testimony is—that they who faithfully improve their opportunities of social prayer, other things being equal, experience more sweet and pure delight in the very exercise; grow more rapidly and steadily in grace; become the most devotional, active and useful Christians; constitute, in fact, the life and soul of the Church; and, finally, that to them more than to all other human means, are we indebted for showers of divine grace and abundant harvests of spiritual blessings.

1. *They experience more sweet and pure delight in the very exercise.* —See this exemplified in the case of a young convert. The prayer-

meeting is the delight of a new-born soul. That which creates delight will be sought again and again. Conscious of the happiness thus afforded, the soul instinctively desires a renewal of the gratification. One who has just been truly converted to God needs no entreaty to engage in the exercise of social devotion. Every opportunity is eagerly embraced.

Recall, fellow-Christian! the days of your own spiritual childhood. With what eagerness was the occasion embraced that gave you an opportunity of such spiritual communion! Were you busily occupied at the time with the cares of the world? They were felt to be a grievous burden, because they interfered with the gratification of this longing desire to be one of the "two or three." Were you pressingly occupied with household affairs? How were the labors of the evening anticipated and put out of the way, that you might have leisure to meet your brethren and sisters "where prayer is wont to be made!" And, when a kind Providence afforded you the gratification, with what emphasis could you say—"Lord! it is good for us to be here!" How sweet the peace—how pure the delight—how full, even to overflowing, the grateful heart, as you bowed before the Lord, as you sung the praises of your glorified Redeemer! These are among the most pleasant remembrances of your whole spiritual history. It was a real joy, an unfeigned and satisfying delight. Those were "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," for which you could not be too grateful. And, when the short hour of prayer had passed, did you not go away from the much-loved spot with a renewed relish for the service of God, with a livelier gratitude for the grace of regeneration, and with more ardent anticipations of another such season of pure enjoyment? I need not ask. There can be but one answer to these questions.

Let me refer also to those seasons of grace when God pours out his Holy Spirit, and the Church is refreshed with frequent showers of divine grace. Then, if ever, spiritual affections and apprehensions are lively; then the renewed heart longs for, and can be satisfied with nothing short of, a real, rational and rich spiritual feast. Baser pleasures no longer please. Worldly gratifications are no longer desired, but regarded even with disgust. Led by the Spirit, the soul of the Christian seeks those places of resort, where its keen and purified appetite for heavenly joys can be gratified to the full. Under this guidance, and impelled by this desire, mindful of former joys, and conscious of the delight afforded by the very thoughts of such a meeting, the Christian hastes to the place of prayer. From "all the dwellings of Jacob" they come up at the appointed hour and crowd the place. Many, who have long absented themselves, by reason of their lukewarmness or coldness, now with eager haste are seen flocking together, evening after evening, and week after week, as though they could not be satiated with such delights.

> "They drink, and drink, and drink again,
> And yet they still are dry."

Such, beloved in the Lord! has been your experience again and

again. You can add your testimony, I know, to that of thousands in all parts of the Lord's heritage, that the more you engage in such exercises of devotion, the more you delight in them and desire them. When, in the providence of God, you are separated for a season from the place of prayer, it is felt to be a hardship indeed. If laid on a bed of sickness, or confined to your dwelling by a lingering and debilitating disease, the place and hour of social prayer is not, cannot be forgotten. If you have been called to take up your abode temporarily or permanently at a place remote from such opportunities, how often do you feel constrained to say—"Oh that I could once more enjoy those blessed prayer-meetings!" Said one to me a short time since—"There is nothing that makes me feel that I have gone from home so much as those prayer-meetings." And this testimony is repeated over and over again. It shows what are the honest convictions of God's dear children, how great has been their sense of enjoyment in such gatherings, and how much they are to be prized as affording the means of greatly increasing one's spiritual gratification.

2. *They grow more rapidly and steadily in grace.*—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." If this is true, as every Christian knows, of secret prayer, it is no less true of social worship, as a great "cloud of witnesses" can testify. Too frequently the course of the believer is like the waves of the sea in their undulations, but not in their progress. Now he is all life, and presently he seems scarcely to breathe. Now he advances with a rapid step, and seems as if he would take heaven itself by storm, and then he is borne onward and downward by the current of worldliness.

There are some, however, who evidently, even in times of great degeneracy, are making steady progress in their journey to the New Jerusalem; whose graces are becoming more and more perfectly developed; whose principles are gaining depth and strength, and who are daily learning more and more of their own hearts and of the riches of grace that are treasured up in Christ Jesus, their Lord. To any of these you may go, and learn how the prayer-meeting is attended. They can tell you, for they are always there, unless an evident providence prevent. Their growth in grace not only prompts them to seek the place of prayer, but is itself in part, and so they feel it to be, a result of frequent attendance there.

Has there ever been a time, my brother! when every week you were accustomed to attend one or more prayer-meetings, and when you endeavored faithfully to improve these means of grace? Are you not convinced that that was a season, not only of high spiritual enjoyment, but of evident and great advance "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?" And this because you were then brought under such influences as served to dispel the darkness, dissipate the mist, and give clearness to your spiritual vision, as also to promote the growth

and strength of all the members of the spiritual body. So has it ever been with all who have fairly made this experiment.

3. *They become the most devotional, active and useful Christians.*—How could it be otherwise! They who most and best grow in grace are sure, as a matter of course, to be the most devotional. They carry away with them, from the place of prayer, such a love for prayer as sends them again and again to their closet and makes the flames of devotion burn brighter on the household altar. This spirit, moreover, accompanies them in, and gives character, to their daily walk and conversation. So much is this the case, that the contrast between them and other members of the Church is perceived, not only by those whose spiritual senses are highly cultivated, but by the ungodly world, who are constrained to take "knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus."

Animated by this spirit of devotion they become, of course, more active in every duty. They are actuated by a living principle. They cannot be so much and so often with their divine Lord, and not partake of his spirit. From communion with him in the place where he is pledged to be present, they derive a lively zeal for doing good. This zeal shows itself in frequent and earnest exertions to bring others to be partakers of their joy. Their fellow-Christians feel the influence of such an example, and are humbled on account of their own deficiency. The unconverted feel it, and are brought to bow with them as they seek the grace of salvation. Thus their activity is of great use to the Church, and their success in doing good—the secret of which may to some extent be learned at the prayer-meeting—prompts others to go and do likewise.

4. *Hence they become the life and soul, as it were, of the Church.*—To put this matter to the test, let us suppose, that, by some remarkable providence, those who are accustomed to attend the meeting for social prayer were taken away from us, separated from their brethren by a removal to some distant place or to a better world, and their places left vacant. What, I ask, would become of the Church? There might be five, or even ten or twenty times as many professors remaining, and the public assembly on the Lord's Day but little diminished; the body might still be there, but where would be the soul! where the pastor's stay and comfort? where the upholders of his hands? where the spiritual life and prosperity of the Church? Alas! I tremble to think of the fatal consequences. God spare to us our praying brethren and sisters!—spare that precious band of believers, who, in summer and in winter, in the clear star-light and in the storm, in revivals and in the season of coldness, are seen gathering, true as the magnet to the pole, to the place of social prayer. Let him take away our wealth, our men of learning and distinction in society—let him take what he will, but Oh, that he would spare us, however poor and obscure they may be, our praying circle!

5. *I need but add, that to them more than all other human means, we are indebted for showers of divine grace.*—They are the representatives of that band of Christians, in answer to whose united prayers, in that "upper chamber" in Jerusalem, the promised Spirit came on the memorable day of Pentecost. And every subsequent revival of religion, it might easily be shown, has, with scarcely an exception, been connected with some such gathering. What pastor, in these days, ever hopes to see his people thus blest, except in connection with such means of grace? Where can the Church be found, on whom God is wont to pour out his Holy Spirit, who know nothing of prayer-meetings? If ever there was a matter placed beyond a doubt, it is that the social prayer-meeting is indispensable to the spiritual prosperity of the Church. But for those, then, who love and frequent these meetings, the churches would soon become "like a heath in the desert."

In Conclusion, I cannot forbear asking,

(1.) If there be any truth in the promise of our text, why is it that prayer-meetings are so neglected? Why is it that in many churches not more than one in every eight or ten can be persuaded to become habitual attendants upon this social service? Let every Christian answer it to his Saviour.

(2.) What blessings might not be expected, if but one half of every church would statedly and heartily engage in this neglected exercise? What a vast increase of spiritual-mindedness would ensue? what an emancipation of the Church from the bondage of the world? what an increase in the number and power of revivals of religion? what an impulse to every good work?

(3.) Can you bear the immense and fearful responsibility of preventing all this good? Can any of you bear it? If all were to do as you do, what would become of the Church? Will you, from this time, remember that Jesus is to be found in the prayer-meeting, and strive to be there yourself? Or, if you have no desire to be with Christ, will you give up your hope?

SERMON CCCLXX.

BY REV. EDWIN HALL,

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THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

"Rejoice evermore."—1 Thessalonians v. 16.

HABITUAL cheerfulness,—a glad and joyful temper, is here inculcated as a Christian duty. We are to be more than contented; we are to REJOICE. We are to do this habitually; "Rejoice evermore."

Let us notice

I. THE NATURE OF THAT JOY:

II. THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH ENFORCE THE DUTY.

1. *The nature of that joy.*—We are not required to be insensible to evil, nor careless of evil.

Our own follies and sins are a natural cause of distress. It was such a one as Paul, the aged and experienced Christian, who cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The sins and miseries of others will touch the Christian's heart. He was a holy man who said, "Horror hath taken hold upon me,"—"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." The Saviour wept over Jerusalem, as he beheld the city, and thought of its approaching doom.

The calamities of Zion will, of necessity, fill the child of God with grief. "Why should not my countenance be sad," cried the pious Nehemiah, "when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nor was he the only child of God who has "sat down and wept, and mourned, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" on account of the calamities of Zion. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Sorrow in the afflictions of others is not forbidden. The Saviour wept at the grave of Lazarus. No precept of religion bids us dry up the fountains of sympathy, which God implanted in the human heart in

its best estate. Religion, in its principles and spirit, would make us kind-hearted sympathetic beings as "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

In one respect, the Christian is called to pass the time of his sojourning here in fear. His acquaintance with his own inconstant and sinful heart; his habitual thoughts of the judgment: his anxiety lest his own soul fail of the grace of life: these things require him to be sober, and to watch unto prayer. These things may so weigh upon the mind, as to give the countenance a cast of gloom; especially where grace in the soul is just sufficient to make one taste the anxieties of religion, but not sufficient to allow him to welcome its joys. But if the Christian will *believe* God, and *obey* God, and be faithful to *seek his* grace, he has a remedy even here. Instead of sinking down under despondency, he should give more diligence to make his calling and election sure.

The Christian is not to be always complaining, always sighing and groaning. He is not to be, nor is he to appear to be, an unhappy man, whose spirit is usually burdened and bowed down. He is to be habitually in such a frame of mind as to enjoy life: and to be such in his habitual temper as naturally to make all happy around him. It is as truly his *duty* to be of such a joyful temper, as it is to feel the sorrow of repentance for sin, or to be solemn in the presence of his God.

The amount of the precept is this: Never be morose: never be gloomy: be of a happy, cheerful disposition: never give way to despondency while God is upon the throne. Be contented;—do more: be so affected with confidence in God; be so grateful for his mercies; partake so largely of the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and of the hope of everlasting life, as to fill your heart with perpetual joy. "*Rejoice evermore.*" "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say* REJOICE."

II. THIS JOY IS A CHRISTIAN DUTY. And if so, the contrary temper is both a blemish and a sin.

1. *The Christian owes to God, this tribute of a grateful and happy heart.*—The Creator has spread the fields with fragrance and with beauty, and filled the air with music, and shed abroad upon the earth the light of his glorious sun, with no other design than that of making man happy, and of declaring his own glorious beneficence.

To be otherwise than rejoicing, when reconciled to our Father; assured by the exceedingly great and precious promises,—that pledge us his favor,—that engage all things to work together for our good; and that secure us heaven at the last, to be otherwise than habitually rejoicing under such circumstances is to be sadly ungrateful, and sadly at variance with the harmony and design of the great plan of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption. What, my soul! discontented and gloomy: thyself the work of such an almighty hand; the object of his providential care; surrounded by so many tokens of his goodness; supplied with so many numberless superfluities, that bespeak the care and tenderness of a Father!

What, my soul! discontented, gloomy, and ungrateful, when redeemed from hell; when adopted into the family of God as a dear child,

and destined to be, ere long, translated to a fairer and eternal world; to live for ever in the presence of God, under his smiles, associated with angels and the spirits of the just made perfect! What, discontented; craving more; dissatisfied with thy Father's mercies; displeased with the lot thy Father gives thee!

Dissatisfied and gloomy Christian; pray tell, what must your Father do for you to make you happy? Cannot all the infinite fulness of Christ content you? Must you needs be unblest till the Lord bestows something which his infinite wisdom and his fatherly kindness see fit to withhold? or till he changes something in that course of his providence which he deems wise and good? Can you not be content to take the world as he suffers it to be under his government? Can you not bear, without impatience, the little trials which he has purposely left in the pathway of your pilgrimage to heaven? Must all the briars and thorns be removed from this fallen world before you can be pleased with the dealings of the Lord your God? Is there no dreadful discipline that your unthankful and unhappy temper may call down upon you, that you are not afraid to be found thus murmuring against God, and suffering your heart to fret against the Lord?

2. *The Christian owes it to himself to be of a rejoicing temper.*—Why should he make himself unhappy? Why should he starve amid the bounties of such a feast? Why should he look forth upon this glorious world of Jehovah, and bring over it a veil of clouds and darkness, only because his own gloomy spirit looks forth from a disordered and jaundiced eye? To be habitually gloomy and desponding is, of course, to be so without cause. Discontented Christian; suppose the Lord should see fit to remove his mercies, since they do not please you; suppose he should see fit to chastise that murmuring spirit, and undertake to subdue that rebellious heart, have you looked around you to see what blessings you are prepared to have taken away? Have you measured the judgments of the Lord that you are so willing to provoke, and so ready to meet them? Have *all* his billows gone over thee? Are you sure that your heart can endure, or your hands be strong in the day when he shall undertake to deal with thee? Take care, Christian, that gloomy dissatisfied spirit comes from a wicked temper—from distrust of God—from insubmission—from an impatient, unthankful, murmuring heart! It must be laid aside of your own voluntary movement; or, if God designs to save you, he will, very probably, efface it from your soul by some dreadful discipline!

3. *The Christian owes it to others.*—They have a claim upon his *justice*, not to render them unhappy by his unhappy looks, and by the unnecessary sighs and groans caused by evils that have their existence mainly in an unhappy temper; or prompted only by the forebodings of a gloomy imagination.

It is a cheap way of making others happy, to associate with them in a cheerful, happy, frame of mind. It is worth more to them than gold—it outweighs the benefit of many kindnesses bestowed. To be otherwise, is a species of dishonesty and of cruelty, the opposite of Christian integrity

and of Christian love. It robs others of their happiness. It is worse than the violence of some sudden outbreak of passion from a temper, in the main, full of generous kindness. With no benefit to one's self, it is a gratuitous infliction of misery, and often upon one's nearest kindred and friends; an infliction against which there is no defence, save that those who are able will generally retreat from it, and leave the unhappy being without friends: and the more unhappy in himself when he finds himself undervalued and neglected.

4. *It is due to the cause of religion.*—A contrary spirit belies religion, and inflicts upon its cause an injury which no open enemy could commit. No one has any right to give such an impression of that religion whose true characteristics are love, heaven, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and which never promotes unhappiness save when it comes into conflict with sin; and when it flings its arrows of conviction into the heart at enmity with God, people are thrown off from Christians and from Christianity by such an unhappiness of temper. Especially is it so, when, unfortunately, the Christian has taken it into his mind that such gloominess is a part of religion itself. What mischiefs such gloomy Christians may do to their families God only can tell. It is not impossible that many a Christian, who has often and fervently prayed for the conversion of his children, has, by his unhappy temper and gloomy deportment, been the cause of their eternal ruin.

5. *Nature concurs with grace in declaring the duty of holy joy.*—We may learn lessons from the fowls of the air, and from the beasts of the field. The groves are filled with melody and songs. The pleasures of intellect and hope, the inferior orders of creation have not; but witness the joyous flights of the birds of the air, and the happy gambols of the animals that sport in freedom upon the earth. The very insects seem sportive in happiness. The children of the human race, unless their joy is unwisely and unhappily hindered, partake of the same natural gladness. Their active sports, and even their rude mirth, and boisterous laughter, show how much of the instinct of happiness God has left in the bosoms even of fallen beings. As age comes on cares increase. The wicked habits of an unhappy world are easily learned. Pride, ambition, folly, fretfulness, and guilt, corrode the mind. When the capacities of the intellect and the heart ought to have fitted the soul for joys more extensive, rational, and refined, too often, alas! poor fallen man has grown more unhappy. But all this is just as unnatural as sin and rebellion against God. The buoyant spirits of youth ought to be succeeded by delight in the service of God. As the bodily strength declines, and earthly joys and earthly hopes depart, the soul ought to find a richer and still richer portion in God. The comfort of the Holy Ghost should more and more fill the soul, till at last it is gathered home, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into the garner of the Lord.

6. *The Christian has sufficient occasion to rejoice evermore.*—Speak you of trials? of afflictions? of sorrows? "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be

revealed in us." They are all only a "light affliction which is but for a moment, working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They are scarcely to be thought of as any just hindrances of the Christian's joy. But our mercies! our causes for joy! They are innumerable. They are unspeakable. Rejoice in God. Rejoice in his government. Rejoice in his forgiveness. Rejoice in his salvation. It does not appear how infinite love and infinite power could give you, in your imperfect state, more or greater causes for rejoicing evermore.

Our Lord told his disciples of perils, reproaches, and persecutions; but, said he, "Those things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." How significant that prayer of Paul for the Christians at Rome! "Now, *the God of* HOPE, FILL *you*, with ALL JOY AND PEACE in believing, that ye may ABOUND *in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.*"

APPLICATION.

And now, brethren, let us endeavor to apply this doctrine to our own improvement. It will cost us effort: it will cost us watchfulness: it will cost us self-denial: for we are fallen beings in a world of trials. But it is a part of the Christian warfare, and we must set out in earnest for the victory.

1. Fix in your mind *that it is your duty* to cultivate the temper of Christian joy. Address yourself earnestly and prayerfully to this work. It is a work which lies wholly in your own soul. Put off a sad and gloomy temper as you would put off a loathsome sin. Leave gloom and repining to the enemies of God: but make it your work to be so grateful, so full of hope and of confidence in God, as to rejoice evermore.

2. *Take the world and your pilgrimage through it as they must be.* Expect not everything smooth and pleasant. Expect not all sunshine. Read the prophets; read the history of days of old: it never was all smooth and pleasant even for prophets and apostles. Then why for you? Your Lord and Master was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And shall you have no need of patience, that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise?

3. If you ever find your soul sinking into a gloomy desponding frame, then ask yourself what it is that troubles you. Are you troubled with your own sins? or are you discontented with the providence of God? or are you distrusting his goodness, his grace and his government? If others have done wrong, then pray for them: but do not for that reason plunge your own soul into rebellion against God.

4. If afflictions, temptations, and trials, press upon you, think first of the duty of submission: you pray every day "Thy will be done." When, therefore, God has done his will, submit to it. "Take the

prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience." "Behold, we count them happy which endure." If you are called to suffer, think how much less this suffering is than that eternal punishment which you have deserved. "Wherefore doth a living man complain?"

If you are bereaved, think that what God does he does well. He neither infringes your rights, nor intends any unkindness, when, in his sovereign pleasure, he takes away what he gave. The only tenure on which he has granted us friends or near kindred is, that we must one day follow them, or they must follow us to the grave.

Are your prospects dark? Do your duty, and commit all to God:—"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Mark that expression: "Casting all your *care* upon him:"—"*all*"—the whole of it. The care is the heaviest part of the burden; and yet it concerns troubles which we may never see. Those troubles ten, fifteen, or twenty years distant! yea, even the care of *to-morrow!* Why, Christian, you may be sleeping in the grave, or if you live, God may not design to bring them upon you. Is not the evil of the day sufficient for it? Must you needs reach forward some days or years, and pull down upon your shoulders burdens which God may never design to lay upon you? The Saviour has charged you, in this respect, to "take no thought for the morrow." Are you so in love with trouble, as to break through the Saviour's command, for the purpose of making yourself unhappy?

Are you poor? Do you fear for want? You are privileged to ask for your daily bread. Say to your soul—"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." God is able to feed you and clothe you, and shelter you here, till he sees best to take you to heaven.

Are you in disease and weakness, sinking down to death? Your heavenly inheritance is just before you. If you are Christ's, this is a token that he is about to fulfil in your case, what he prayed to the Father: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." If Christ removes you, fear not that he will fail to take care of your children and friends, for whom it seems to you so needful that you should be suffered to remain.

The cause of Christ, so dear to you, often languishes. So it must, while God suffers the wickedness of men, and allows them to unfold their true character. But the ark is safe. Cease not to pray for Zion; to care for Zion, and to labor for Zion, while you live; but never be distressed with Jesus for Zion: she is safe. She shall yet subdue and bless the whole world: and if you love her, your eyes shall see it: either on earth or in heaven, you shall behold it, and join the triumph which proclaims that "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ."

You often, perhaps, feel sad for your country. But if your country is ruined, you are a citizen of the kingdom of God. It may be Jeho-

vah's purpose to overturn our boasted institutions, and to show that He is a jealous God who will not give his glory to another. But there is a kingdom dearer than our country; one fraught with richer blessings to mankind; and that is an everlasting kingdom, which shall not be destroyed.

Oh Christian, what infinite resources are yours! Do you lack wisdom? You may ask it of God. Do you want forgiveness? You may come to the mercy seat: and you have an infinite advocate and Redeemer. Do you want grace? The Holy Spirit shall be given you in answer to prayer. "Whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

6. If you would be happy, draw nearer and nearer to the throne, and drink from the purest springs of divine love. Here is light, and strength, and life. Here are unfailing springs of joy. Abide in Christ. Draw nigh to him in prayer. With Paul, "Bow your knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

It is only to *love God; obey God; trust in God; and submit to God;* and you may say with the Prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The Christian may rejoice evermore. But what rational and enduring joy is there for the impenitent sinner? The highest springs of enjoyment are never opened to his soul. At war with his own reason: at war with his own conscience: every moment of reflection, every thought of his prospects for eternity causing him distress: no hope in God; the justice and the strength of the Almighty against him: how can he be happy? There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked. "I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?" It is but a sickly moment, and dream of joy. The lot of the child of God becomes reversed in the case of the wicked: Joy may endure for a night; but weeping cometh in the morning. "Delight is not seemly for a fool." It is a melancholy sight to behold one made for the endless holiness and happiness of the eternal world, embittering his present life, posting on to eternal sorrow, and yet trying to fancy himself happy. The Saviour said, "Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." Not that flowing spirits and joy are displeasing to the Saviour: but that beings living in sin, and under the wrath and curse of God, can be so careless and so deluded, while living in such a character, and hasting to such a doom. Oh, how often I think

of this, when I see people possessed of every earthly means of happiness;—health, abundance, friends,—and having the appearance of joy! It pains me not that they can be joyful; nor yet so much that they go only to the lowest fountains for joy:—but to think that they can be so whole at heart, while at enmity with God!—and to think that their very mirth and gaiety may be the means of drowning reflection; of alluring them on in a more eager chase after earthly pleasures, till the things that belong to their peace are hidden from their eyes. How often I think of it, as I enter the mansions of elegance and ease, where God is not worshipped: how often this sentence of holy writ seems to sound in my ears: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked;" nor can all the refinement, the splendor, the social converse, or the pleasant music banish that dreadful sound. I think I see them stand on slippery places. Divine mercy calls, but they will not hear. The Saviour pleads, but they have no heart to hear. I look forward a little, and the power of that neglected Saviour darkens the skies. The storms of the last day are gathering. The thunders of the judgment shake the sky. Where then will the enemies of God appear?

Oh dying fellow-sinners, how can you be happy with the infinite God against you?

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Come, be reconciled to God. Lo! his own voice invites you: "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Dying fellow-sinner, shall there be peace between your soul and the infinite God?

THE NATURE OF SIN.

"You say, reader, that you know you are a sinner, but that you cannot *feel* it. You do not realize your guilt. You admit that your soul is under the influence of sin, but you do not *feel it as a burden.* I wish in this article to point out to your attention two particulars in the nature of sin, which may perhaps assist you to feel that it is really a burden.

1. It is the nature of sin to perpetuate itself. Where it gets hold it keeps hold. This is one of its worst features, and we can see it in all cases,—in all kinds of sin. If a man does wrong once, the greatest of all the evils which will result from it is, that, in similar circumstances, he will be ready to do the same wrong again. He brings himself into such a state by one act of transgression that he will yield more easily to temptation the next time. The bad principle acquires strength by indulgence, and conscience is discouraged and silenced by having been once overwhelmed.

This is true of all sorts of sin, so that the first act of transgression is not to be dreaded so much on account of its own direct and immediate injuries, as on account of its being the prolific parent of a thousand other sins. It is always so regarded in actual life. Suppose, for instance, a father were to see his little son stealing forth some evening to purloin fruit from a neighbor's garden. He watches him, we will suppose, from a window, and sees his hesitating step, and anxious, agitated countenance; and he knows that this is the first act of open dishonesty which his son has been led to commit. Suppose now that the father is in some way deprived of the opportunity of interfering, and that he must sit quietly by, and see his boy take his first step in the career of crime. I need not describe his feelings. The question I wish to bring up is, what will give his feelings their acutest sting? It is not the direct consequences of this first step. It is not the value of the property to be taken. It is not the fear of the injured neighbor's displeasure. It is not any apprehended difficulty in settling the affair with him. Nor is it the sufferings which he knows he must, in justice and in faithfulness, inflict upon his son, nor the remorse which his son must endure, when he comes, in sober mind, to look back upon his sin, nor even the single stain of guilt which this one act produces. What is it, then? Why, that the father sees, or fears he sees, in this first step, *the beginning of a long life of crime.*

I mean he sees that *the tendency* of this first step, *if not counteracted,* will be to lead to a long life of crime. Doubtless he will endeavor to counteract it; he will hope to do so;—but this danger that the first step will lead to others like it, and worse, is what gives the affair almost all its consequence. Were it not for this, many a father might perhaps

simply look upon it as a juvenile offence, worthy of very little consideration.

So with all sin. One of its darkest features is its power to perpetuate itself; where it gains admission, it establishes and perpetuates its own reign. If a child tells a falsehood, the worst of it is, that he has taken a great step toward fitting himself for telling many more. If a man deals once unjustly by his neighbor, he has probably commenced a long series of acts of injustice. Sin is thus a viper which breeds, in a most prolific manner, its own kind, and keeps permanent possession, wherever it is once admitted.

God seems to afford, in this world, the opportunity for sin to show itself in a variety of forms, that we may see its nature, and by the analogy of its effects between man and man, learn its character in respect to the relation between man and God. Now sin against God tends, in the manner above described, to perpetuate itself. When Adam first disobeyed his Maker's command, one of the worst aspects of the case was the fact that, left to himself, he would go on disobeying. So when, in early life, a child first commits sin, he admits something into his bosom which *will* stay there;—or rather he will keep it there. The wrong he begins to do, he will go on to do, if God leaves him to choose his own way. Therefore he who is living in sin, has brought himself under an influence which is, in its nature, perpetual. There must be a moral interference from above to save him from it,—or else just as of his own accord he first sinned, so he will perpetually, of his own accord, go on to sin.

Reader, are you still in sin? If so, the great difficulty,—the gloomiest and the most melancholy aspect of your case, consists in the future, not in the past. The past guilt is deep and dark enough, it must be acknowledged; but it is nothing compared to that which is before you,—directly in your path, which you are steadily pressing forward to, and will press forward to, as long as God leaves you to your own chosen way.

2. It is the nature of sin to perpetuate its own punishment. That is, though the sin may be over in a moment, the suffering remains. It remains, too, *indefinitely;* in fact, time very often sharpens its sting.

Suppose a man commits some sinful act;—in order to make the point clearer, we will take a very strong case;—in a fit of sudden passion, he kills his own child. He did not really intend to murder it, but in a fit of passion, excited by something in which the child was not to blame, he strikes a sudden blow which takes away its life. The sin is over in a moment. But how long will it be before the father can think of it without pain? It is an idea which many persons vaguely entertain, that sin carries its own punishment with it, at the time of its commission, and that it settles the account as it goes along. But nothing can be more inconsistent with facts. Sin leaves its sting *behind.* And it is a sting which time alone can never extract. The pressure of business or pleasure may remove for a time the recollection of guilt, but the re-

collection itself, when it comes, must be attended with pain, however remote may be the period of the transgression.

Any honest student of mental philosophy, who should endeavor, by observation merely, to investigate the human heart, would come inevitably to this conclusion. He will see this power of sin to fix a thorn which cannot be eradicated wherever it gains admission, acting universally. The wound may remain insensible for a time, but it cannot be cured. The sinner may forget his sin, but he cannot cut off his responsibility for it, or escape from the danger of having the corroding sufferings of it break out upon him at any time. They do sometimes break out in this world. After the lapse of many years, the bitter recollections of early guilt will come over the soul, and overwhelm it with suffering. God assures us, too, that, in another world they will come with all their power.

The nature of sin, then, is such that he who commits it, plants a thorn in his side, which at first he may not feel, but it will bring torture at last. It is as if a boy, whose body had lost its sensibility by some dreadful disease, should cut and tear his flesh wantonly in his sports, thus inflicting wounds which will inflame, and will drive him to distraction when sensibility shall return. The soul is morally insensible and dead. It does not feel the spiritual wounds, which are inflicted upon it; but *every wound remains*. There is no natural sanative process which can cure them. And sensibility is to return. In fact it is not wholly gone now, but, at a future day, it will fully return.

These are, perhaps, two of the most important characteristics of the nature of sin. Every person who is living in alienation from God, is under its dominion. Reader, are you such an one, and can you think of your condition with careless unconcern?"

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SERMON CCCLXXI.

BY REV. JOEL HAWES, D. D.

HARTFORD, CONN.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.*

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." John 4; 21—26.

This is a part of the conversation which our blessed Lord had with the woman of Samaria, at Jacob's well. The whole conversation is deeply interesting and instructive, and I invite your attention to it, this morning, with the view of showing the spirit of the woman as a bigot, the wisdom of the Saviour in the treatment of her, and the happy consequences which resulted from his manner of treating her.

On the morning of the 4th of last April, having spent the preceding night in Nabulus, the ancient Schechem afterwards Sychar, I left the town about 9 o'clock, in company with several of my fellow travellers, and began to ascend Mount Gerizim, which rose before us to the height of about 800 feet, and stretched to the east, the point which we wished to attain. The ascent was steep and difficult; but after near an hour's hard toil, we reached the highest elevation, where the ancient Samaritans were wont to pay their worship, and where now the little remnant of them, residing at Nabulus, go in procession four times a year for the same purpose. Here is their *holy place*, where they sacrifice the passover, seven lambs among them all, and perform their various religious services,—believing them to have a peculiar holiness and acceptableness

* It is due to the respected author of the following discourse to say that, suggested as the subject was by his visit to Mount Gerizim, the sermon was hastily written soon after his return for his ordinary pulpit ministrations without thought of publication, and it is now given to the public without revision, at the solicitation of the

Editor.

to God, because performed on this particular spot. There is no temple there, though there are the ruins of one, and the fragments of buildings which lie scattered thick around, indicate that a large town once occupied this site. The view from this position is one of exceeding beauty and grandeur. Overlooking the intervening hills and valleys, you see in the west, at the distance of some twenty or thirty miles, the Mediterranean, bordering the broad rich plain of Sharon, stretching far to the north and south. Over against you, on the north, rises Mount Ebal and to an equal height with that of Mount Gerizim; but more bold and rocky if possible, and so near that voices can be heard from one mountain to the other, separated only by a valley of about 500 yards wide. Beneath you, at the east, lies spread out a rich extended plain, including the tomb of Joseph, Jacob's farm as it is called, and also the well which bears his name. Along the foot of the Mount and on the edge of the plain, runs the road which leads from Jerusalem to Galilee, on which our Lord and his disciples were wont to travel, as they went to and from these places. Standing on that spot, the summit of Gerizim, with the various localities distinctly marked and spread out in full view before me, I could easily imagine that I saw the blessed Saviour and his followers, on the occasion referred to in our text, wending their way along this road around the south east base of the mountain, and drawing near to Jacob's well. There the Master, wearied with his journey and the heat of the day, seats himself by the well, while his disciples pass up the valley a short distance, to the city to buy food. At this point a woman of Samaria comes near to draw water. With a view to engage her in conversation, our Saviour asks her to give him to drink. Instantly her prejudices are roused, and she replies, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? There had been a controversy between the Jews and Samaritans of long standing. It related especially to the proper place of worshipping God,—the Jews claiming that it was in Jerusalem, and the Samaritans that it was in Mount Gerizim. This controversy ran so high and was carried on with such bitterness of spirit, that it interrupted all the civilities of life, and even prevented common dealings with one another. This old enmity continues to the present day, and the little handful of Samaritans, about 120* in number, residing in Nabulus, still insist that on Mount Gerizim is the very place where God is to be worshipped, and all the world are wrong in this point but themselves.

The woman who came to draw water had caught the spirit of her sect. She was evidently full of the subject in controversy, and it so absorbed her thoughts and perverted her feeling as to make her utterly blind to the deep, spiritual instruction which fell from the lips of the divine Teacher. Hence, when he spoke of giving her living water, if she would but ask it, of which if one drink he shall never thirst,

* They are variously estimated from 120 to 150.

she could think only of *common literal* water, and at once began to question whether he was greater than Jacob, who had given the well to her ancestors and drank of it himself with his children and cattle.

And when, in the course of the conversation, she was convinced that our Lord was a prophet, because he showed himself acquainted with her secret history and thoughts, instead of seeking instruction from him how she might repent of sin and be saved, she at once raised the old dispute and says: Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. The great thing with her was the *place*, the *manner*, the *form* of worship, not the *spirit*, the *life*, the *heart* of it. Though her morals were very questionable, and she was at this time living with one who was not her husband, still she was mighty zealous for her sect, and was ready at once to enter into a dispute as to the place and manner of worship. In a word, she was a bigot. She attached an undue importance to the mere circumstantials of religion, to forms and ceremonies. She was obstinately and unreasonably wedded to a sect, a party, a practice and ritual, which had respect to the externals, the outside of religion; and this made her exclusive, filled her with prejudice and dislike against all others who differed from her in opinion, or did not come up to her standard, in regard to these outward, non-essential parts of worship. This is the proper idea of a bigot; and I have drawn it out thus particularly, that you may know just what character is denoted by the term. It denotes a person who has a blind unreasonable attachment to a particular creed, or place, or mode of worship; and maintains that attachment with an exclusive sectarian spirit. It is no bigotry to hold fast the great essentials of religion, or to maintain with earnestness and zeal, the faith once delivered to the saints, which involves the honor of God and the salvation of man. Our Lord was no bigot, though he made faith in him and his doctrines essential to salvation. Paul was no bigot, though he maintained the truth of the gospel; with uncompromising firmness, and even wished those were cut off who perverted the true gospel and preached one that was false. So Luther and the Reformers of his day were no bigots; they waged deadly war against the corruptions of Rome, and maintained, at the peril of their lives, the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Bigotry does not consist in believing, loving and maintaining the truth and ordinances of God, with a zeal and firmness proportioned to their relative importance. But it consists in magnifying what is small; in erecting into terms of communion and conditions of salvation, things which are not allowed to be such in the Bible, and contending for these things with a narrow, exclusive, sectarian spirit. The pharisees were bigots; who, while they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment and the love of God, paid tithe of mint, anise and cummin, and insisted upon the observance of their ritual, as essential to acceptable worship. The catholics are bigots, and all who symbolize with them in sentiment and practice, because they unreasonably magnify forms and ceremonies and make connection with their

church essential to the pardon and acceptance with God,—consigning all, who are not so connected, to uncovenanted mercy. So were the woman of Samaria and her countrymen, generally, bigots, because they believed that God would be worshipped nowhere acceptably but on Mount Gerizim, and were so intolerant in maintaining this dogma, that they bitterly hated their neighbors, the Jews, who worshipped God in Jerusalem. And never did bigotry appear to me more odious, or more contemptible, wicked and foolish, than when I saw it exemplified in the old Samaritan priest, a man about 65 years of age, and his son, who promises to be a worthy successor of his father. There they were, I saw them in their synagogue, the only two duly authorized priests in all the world, and the little company of their adherents, some 120 all told, the only true church on earth,—both priests and church having come down in the veritable line of succession from Aaron, and still having in their possession, the oldest and only true copy of the Pentateuch in the world,—it having been written by Abishu, the son of Phineas, 3460 years ago, all of which is to be received as a part of essential faith. And when after an hour's hard ride up a steep mountain, over ravines, and precipices, and rocks, I stood on the spot, where, according to Samaritan faith, men must go to worship God, if they would worship him acceptably, I could not but exclaim, *this is genuine bigotry; —here we have it,*—it sends people away from the ever present Father, from the true spiritual worship, which he requires, and bids them climb to the tops of mountains, and there sets them down amid rocky desolation and barrenness, and feeds them with empty forms and ceremonies. There stood Ebal frowning over against me; and I could not but think, that all the curses which Moses commanded, should be denounced from thence, against those who should forsake the right ways of the Lord and go after idols, might justly fall, with a ten-fold weight, on such as pervert the simplicity and spirituality of Christian worship; teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and delude people with the vain conceit of superior sanctity and acceptableness to God, simply because they belong to a particular church, or pay their worship in a particular place, and according to particular forms. Let us turn now and consider:

II. The manner in which our Saviour treated this bigoted woman of Samaria.

1. It is worthy of remark, that he entered into no dispute with her. At the very commencement of the interview, the woman started several topics which were of a controversial nature. She expressed her surprise that our Lord, being a Jew, should ask drink of her, who was a Samaritan. She questioned his superiority, both in respect to wisdom and power, to her ancestor Jacob. And she claimed that Gerizim, and not Jerusalem, was the place where men ought to worship. These several points our Lord evaded, as of little importance in themselves, and entirely irrelevant to the object he had in view, which was to convince the woman of her error and sinfulness, and bring her to repentance. She was not now in a state of mind to be convinced or

profited by disputation. She was narrow, sectarian, bigoted in her feelings. The difficulty in her case was more of the heart than of the head, and had our Lord entered into controversy with her on the points she suggested, the effect would have been to confirm her prejudice and inflame still more her ill temper. He therefore aims to draw her away from matters controversial and speculative, and to fix her attention upon the great spiritual truths of religion.

There are some persons with whom it does no good to dispute; and bigots are eminently of this character. They are diseased at heart. They see everything through a false medium. Their state of mind is such, as makes little things appear great, and great things little. And to attempt to convince such persons by argument, were as vain as to try to make blind men see, or deaf men hear by argument. The application, in such cases, should be to the heart rather than to the head. And this was the way in which our Saviour treated the woman of Samaria. Her mind was full of prejudice and bigotry respecting the external, non-essential parts of religion. To have disputed with her on these things, would have been like pouring oil on fire. The divine Teacher therefore avoided them, and led her to the knowledge of the truth, by another and more successful way.

2. There is something very noticeable in the mildness and gentleness with which our Saviour treated this woman. Her manner of addressing the stranger, who sat by the well side, was exceedingly arrogant and offensive. She refused to give him so much as a drink of water; held his character in disparagement as a Jew, and plainly intimated that he was wholly wrong on the question as to the place and manner of paying acceptable worship to God. Passing by all this, our blessed Lord, in the mildest and gentlest manner possible, goes on in his discourse with her, as though nothing improper had fallen from her lips, and gradually corrects her errors about the place and mode of worship, about forms and ceremonies, opening to her view the great spiritual truths of religion. He turns her attention away from rites and forms, and leads her to think of *herself*, her sins, her own personal need of grace to sanctify and save her; and all this he does in so kind and so serious a manner, that he soon began to win upon her confidence, to allay her prejudices, and she was prepared in the end to listen to him, first as a prophet, and then as the Messias, the Saviour of the world. Here we have a perfect model of the way in which we should treat persons who are under the influence of the spirit of bigotry and sectarianism. They can be won by kindness much easier than they can be convinced by argument. They have a heart to feel the attractions of love, though they may have no mind to see the light or feel the power of argument, especially when aimed at their prejudices. We can hope very little good from cold dry argument, employed against sectarians and bigots. And least of all can good be expected from railing at them, or calling them hard names. If any insist that Mount Gerizim is the place where God must be worshipped, or, which is virtually the same thing, if any insist that theirs is the only true church,

theirs the only authorized ministry, theirs the only valid ordinances, and that all not connected with their communion, are out of the appointed way of salvation, and must be left, like the heathen, to uncovenanted mercies,—if any, I say, insist upon dogmas like these, breathing only the spirit of bigotry and narrow-mindedness, the best way to treat them is that adopted by our Saviour in the case before us. Do not dispute with them, do not assail their prejudices; but treat them kindly; pity them and pray for them; and strive, when you converse with them, to bring them to a better frame of mind, to think of their sins and of their personal need of God's mercy to pardon and save them.

3. In his conversation with the woman of Samaria, our Saviour aimed to show her the worthlessness of all mere forms of worship, by leading her to entertain just views of the nature of the true, spiritual worship of God. The opportunity was most favorable for giving instruction on these points, and our blessed Lord improves it, not for the benefit of the woman only, but of all who should become his disciples in after ages. At the point where she brought forward the main dogma of her faith, that Mount Gerizim was the appointed place of worship the Saviour meets her with the declaration, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Hitherto the public, solemn worship of God has been confined to one place. It has been a matter of dispute whether that place should be Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. That controversy is now of little importance. A new, spiritual dispensation is about to commence. The peculiar rites of Judaism are to cease; and the worship of God, no longer confined to a single place, is to be observed everywhere, and with as much acceptance in one place as another. It is not the *place*, it is not the outward *form* that God regards in his worship; but the *heart*, the *spirit*, the *frame* of the inner man. The hour is coming, yea is, when external rites and ceremonies as connected with worship are to be accounted of no value in themselves; and the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. The reason assigned for this follows,—God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. This is one of the first truths of religion, and one of the sublimest truths ever presented to the mind of man. God is announced as a pure, spiritual Being; invisible, eternal, present in every place. This being his nature, he dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things. A pure, a holy, a spiritual worship is therefore alone adapted to his nature; that alone he seeks, or requires, the offering of the heart, the homage of the mind, the devout, reverential, subjection of the soul to him, the all-perfect Jehovah, the eternal infinite I Am. How does instruction like this put to flight all the silly notions that men have invented in regard to times, and places, and rites, and forms of worship? God is a Spirit, a great truth; and it follows irresistibly from this, that if we would worship God acceptably we must worship him in spirit

and in truth; our hearts, our souls must be in our worship; all forms, all ceremonies, however exact, however costly, are nothing without this; and with this, our worship is right and acceptable to God, wherever paid and in whatever forms.

III. Let us pass to notice, thirdly, the happy consequences which resulted from the manner in which our Saviour treated the woman of Samaria. And,

1. Her prejudices were gradually subdued, and her mind was opened to listen to the instructions of the divine Teacher, with candor and docility.

2. Drawn away from her excessive and bigoted regard to things outward and non-essential, she was made to think of her person alsinfulness, and to feel her need of renewing grace—pardoning mercy. Hence,

3. There is reason to believe that she was converted, became a Christian and an heir of heaven.

4. Through her instrumentality, or in consequence of the change wrought in her and her zeal in reporting what she had seen and heard of Christ, many others of the Samaritans came from the city to hear him for themselves, and became his disciples. All this is evident, as you may see from a perusal of the narrative from which our text is taken. But I cannot enlarge. Our blessed Lord, seeing the fields white unto the harvest, multitudes flocking from the city and surrounding villages to hear him, was persuaded by the people to tarry with them two days. And many more, it is said, believed, because of his own word; and said unto the woman,—now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Now all this resulted from the manner in which our Saviour treated the woman in question. He entered into no dispute with her. He did not directly attack her prejudices; but led her along in the most kind and winning manner, laying open great, spiritual truths to her view, till at length awakened, convinced and converted, she renounced her bigotry, turned from Gerizim to Christ, learned to worship God in spirit and in truth, and showed the sincerity and earnestness of her faith, by striving to bring others to an acquaintance with him whom she had chosen as her Saviour's King.

The change in her was great and most happy, as it was also in those of her countrymen who believed in Christ. Convinced of the great truth that God is a Spirit, and that all acceptable worship of him must be from the heart, sincere, internal, spiritual, they were no longer disposed to quarrel about places and modes of worship; but were anxious only to prove themselves to be of those true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. A Christian church was subsequently gathered there, and for many generations Christianity flourished there with much purity and power. At length war in its successive ravages swept away the city; laid waste the surrounding country; and now all that remains of ancient piety and of the pure worship of God are the ruins of two churches—one in Sebastie, the ancient Samaria;

the other near to Jacob's well, where our Lord held the discourse, on which we have been remarking, with the woman of Samaria.

The lessons which I have wished to impress on your minds, my friends, by what I have said, are these.

1. To show you the *nature, evil* and *cure* of bigotry—a moral malady, very prevalent in our day, and not a little contagious. Its *nature* is to make great things little and little things great; to attach an overweening importance to things outward and non-essential, and to maintain these things with an obstinate, exclusive spirit. The *evil* of bigotry is to beget and cherish a bad spirit in those who are the subjects of it; to narrow and to sour their minds; to pervert and make void the great essential truths of the gospel; to delude and destroy men by leading them to trust in dead forms and ceremonies, to the neglect of charity and the love of God; and finally to spread through the community where it prevails, the fruits of jealousy, alienation, sectarianism and strife. The *cure* of it, as we learn from our Saviour, is not in disputation, or in harsh denunciatory dealing, but in kindness, in pity, in forbearance, in drawing away the mind from its fond, overweening attachment to things outward and little, by opening to its view and pressing on its attention the great, fundamental, spiritual truths of religion. Here is the cure of bigotry. It is a disease of the heart, rather than of the head, and no applications are likely to remove it, which do not tend to make the heart better, to expel selfishness and pride from the bosom, and inspire there the love of God and the love of man. I wished—

2. To show you, from the example of Christ, how you should treat bigots. The Samaritan woman was a bigot. She believed that her's was the only true church, that Mount Gerizim was the only place where God could be acceptably worshipped, and that the priests of her order were the only ones authorized to minister in the things of religion. It was *a hard case, very hard.* You have seen how the Saviour treated it. He did not dispute with her; he did not denounce her; he did not rail at her, or ridicule her; but compassionating her weakness, and her folly for holding such notions, he conversed with her in such a manner as to conciliate her kind feelings, and thus prepared the way to let in the light of great essential truth upon her mind, which converted her from her bigotry and made her a true disciple of Christ. This is the right way; and it is the only way that is likely to be of any avail in curing or correcting the bigotry of our times. We see it prevailing widely around us. In various quarters, and in different sects, persons are rising up, both laity and clergy, who greatly magnify little things; who are for ever insisting upon the importance of certain rites and forms in religion; who claim that they are of the only true church, and in the only appointed way of salvation. Now I do not know that all the disputing and arguing, of which there has been so much in these last years, have availed to convert or to cure a single one of the many who are infected with the bigotry indicated by such sentiments. Such disputing and arguing may have operated, and I think have operated, as a sanitary measure to keep others from taking the disease;

just as we draw a cordon around a place where the yellow fever or plague prevails; but it is more than I know if a single one, already under the power of the disease, has ever been recovered by the means referred to. Another remedy must be used; and what that is you may learn from the example of the Saviour in the case we have been considering. A high churchman, a bigot, whether he be Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, Catholic, Jew or Mahometan—and the spirit in all of them is essentially alike—is not, I think, primarily to be approached with disputation and argument. He is beyond the reach of these. The first effort should be in the way of pity, compassion and kindness, just as we deal with diseased persons; and then, avoiding all dispute on points of controversy, seek to fix the attention upon the great, spiritual truths of religion such as relate directly to the soul, to God and salvation. This method is likely to be blessed of God; and whether it succeed or not, you will have the satisfaction of having imitated the example of Christ, and must stand approved of him.

3. I wished, in selecting the subject of my text for your consideration, to lead you to a just view of true and acceptable worship. It is, that it be of the heart, of the spirit; that it proceed from a mind deeply and solemnly affected with a view of God as a Spirit, pure, holy, invisible, everywhere present; and that it be offered to him in true sincerity of soul. This is the worship which is due to our God; the worship which he requires of us; which alone is acceptable in his sight, or can be of any benefit to ourselves. This worship, it is our privilege to know, can be rendered to God at any time and in any place. It is not confined to the cathedral or to the church, and is not limited to the Sabbath or to any one day or hour of the week. In the house, by the way, at home, abroad, kneeling in the closet, or bowing in the great congregation, God, the eternal, ever-present Spirit, is near to us, and we may worship him in spirit and in truth. He knows our wants; his ear is attentive to our cry; and never can we be in a situation, where we shall not have the privilege of bowing down and worshipping him, the great Eternal. But while the spirituality of God thus presents him to our view as ever present with us, to regard and accept our worship, it shows us also that no worship can be acceptable to him, which is not in spirit and in truth; proceeding from a mind reverent of the divine majesty, penetrated with a sense of unworthiness, and moved with a sincere desire of his favor and glory. All other worship but this, wherever paid and in whatever forms, is but empty breath in the sight of him, the great Searcher of hearts, with whom we have to do. Let this thought possess your mind whenever you kneel in the closet, bow in the family, or enter the sanctuary to worship. God is *there*, is *here*, to notice the frame of your spirit, the thoughts and feelings of the inner man; and while he will graciously hear the humble and contrite in spirit, and bestow all needed grace and help, he will frown upon the proud, the insincere, and the worldly, however gorgeous the forms, or imposing the rites in which their worship is paid.

SERMON CCCLXXII.

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THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

"To the poor the gospel is preached."—Luke vii. 22.

THE religion of Jesus Christ is authenticated by evidences the most luminous, copious, and incontestable. Two classes of these evidences are presented in the passage from which our text is taken, viz. *the fulfilment of prophecy*, and *the peculiar and distinguishing characteristics of the religion itself*. The whole verse reads as follows, "Then Jesus answering said unto them, go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." The circumstances in which these words were spoken by our blessed Lord must be familiar to every reader of the New Testament. John had been cast into prison for his fidelity and boldness in rebuking iniquity in high places, and hearing there of the works of Christ he sent to him two of his disciples with the inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" In other words, art thou *he that cometh*, i. e., the true Messiah, or must we expect another? Jesus did not give a direct reply to the interrogatory, but having in the presence of these disciples of John performed many beneficent miracles, by which various forms of misery were removed from the wretched sufferers, he bids them return and report to their Master what things they had *seen* and *heard*. He refers John to the marks of the true Messiah predicted by the prophets and especially by the prophet Isaiah (the language of our Saviour here being nearly a literal quotation from one of this prophet's predictions concerning the Messiah). These marks he *himself* exhibited. The prophecy was fulfilled in him ages before the inspired Seer, "rapt into future times," had described the character of the Messiah. All the extraordinary and superhuman traits of this wonderful character stood out in bold and striking relief: so that when the *real* personage should make his appearance there need be no difficulty in identifying him as the one of "whom Moses and the prophets wrote." Jesus of Nazareth *realized* the prophetic representation. He presented a living exemplification of the strange and mysterious combination of divine and human attributes ascribed to the Christ of God. Every feature of the inspired de-

lineation which had been contemplated with adoring wonder by holy men in ages past, found in him its living and glowing original. The wonderful display of power and beneficence, the pure, sublime, and benevolent doctrines which the *predicted* Messiah should do and teach, the same *Jesus* did and tanght. This is demonstration. Jesus of Nazereth *is* the Christ of God, and the doctrine which he taught is from heaven.

But the fulfilment of prophecy not alone attests the Messiahship of Jesus, and the heavenly origin of the religion he taught. The peculiar and distinguishing characteristics of this religion afford a demonstration of the same truths, not less irresistible and overwhelming. It bears the signatures of Divinity. It is written all over, within and without, with heavenly characters. It has no likeness to, or affinity with, any system of philosophy or religion of man's devising. Whencesoever it had its origin, nothing can be more certain than that it *never* originated with man. It is not at all like him. Its mysteries bespeak a wisdom which is not in him. Its doctrines unfold a purity, spirituality, and an eternity, which constitute a perfect contrast to his pollution, sensuality, and undivided devotion to things of time. Its effects display a power of which not a single element is his. Its spirit, and the blessings it diffuses, express a benevolence which his selfish heart never felt, nor is capable of comprehending.

The character of the religion of Christ is an irresistibly convincing attestation of its truth. "The gospel is its own witness." This religion is called the gospel from its nature and design. It is summarily characterized as *glad tidings* to men. For although it did not originate with men, and is wholly opposed to the spirit of men, nevertheless it is designed for, and adapted to them. Its design is to promote their highest good, to work entire changes in their vile natures, and fit them for the enjoyment of perfect happiness. It is a remedial and redemptive system, which completely repairs the ruins of sin, and restores fallen and depraved beings to the dignity and purity and immortal blessedness of the heavenly state. Mankind are lost—utterly lost. Here is found for them a complete salvation. They are guilty, and at deadly enmity with God. Here are terms of full and free pardon, and of entire and perfect reconciliation. They are depraved, polluted, and of consequence wretched. This renovates, purifies, and opens to them exhaustless fountains of joy and consolation. Yes, the religion of Christ is a heaven-devised scheme for the alleviation of human misery; an all-efficacious remedy for the mortal diseases of the human soul. It has compassions, reliefs, and consolations for every species of wretchedness to which our sinful race is heir, and asks nothing of them but a cordial and thankful acceptance of the proffered balm. It is the manifestation of a strange and inconceivable love—love to beings all unlovely, and hateful and disgusting. It is a love which none but the mind of God could conceive, and none but the heart of God could feel. The divine author of this blessed religion, who in the days of his incarnation, taught it by precept, and exemplified it by practice, was un-

ceasingly employed in relieving the various forms of bodily misery and mental anguish, and in teaching truths that made wise unto salvation, and were the eternal life of the soul; and he closed his earthly career by the sacrifice of himself amid personal sufferings, which no language can describe, and no imagination conceive, that poor miserable sinners might become heirs with him to the dignities and glories and joys of an eternal inheritance in heaven.

But while his blessed religion embraces all mankind without distinction of birth or of condition in its compassionate regards, while its privileges and blessings are free to all alike—(and they are needed by all alike)—to the king upon his throne, to the peasant in his hovel, to the rich man in his purple, and the beggar in his rags,—to the wise in his wisdom, and the simple in his ignorance,—to the learned in his fame, and the illiterate in his obscurity,—it looks with an eye of *peculiar* benignity upon the poor of this world. It is emphatically, and by way of eminence, glad tidings to the *poor*. This *speciality* of regard to the poor is given by our Lord in the words of the text as the crowning evidence that his reign had begun. This, of itself, was sufficient to authenticate his mission,—to stamp his doctrine as divine. There was no principle in man to prompt him to regard with an eye of compassion and make special provision for the suffering poor.

Among the most frightful exhibitions of human depravity, man's inhumanity to man is not the least conspicuous. The universal and unrelieved selfishness which pervades and constitutes the elemental principle of his depraved nature, precludes the conception, much more the execution, of any plan for the relief of the wants and woes of those who can make no return. Engrafted upon this selfishness is a feeling which leads him to despise and utterly neglect the poor because he is poor. For whatever of a contrary character exists among men we are indebted to the religion contained in the Bible. Unroll the volume of history—peruse the annals of a godless world during the ages preceding the advent of Christ, and of all heathen nations since that time, and point me to one single system of religion or of philosophy, or of civil policy, or of domestic economy, that had an aspect of kindness to the poor, and made any provisions for their relief and comfort. They were left to pine in want, and waste away by disease; to suffer, to agonize, to die, unrelieved, unpitied, and alone. They were held as nothing worth, and as sheep for the slaughter. The warrior valued them only as they might serve to fill up the legions he was remorselessly sacrificing to his lawless ambition. The statesman thought of them only while devising plans to protect the institutions of the state from the outbreakings of their undisciplined passions. The philosopher uttered no voice of instruction and admonition to them. The priests had no sympathy or consolation for *their* distresses. No man cared for their souls, or for their bodies either. We turn to the religion of God's chosen people, and here a heavenly light breaks upon the darkness of the poor man's destiny. God reveals himself as his friend and his avenger, and denounces the heaviest judgments upon those that op-

pressed him. Kindness to the poor is enforced as a solemn duty, and amplest provisions are made for their support and comfort in the Mosaic institute. This religion, then, could not be from men. But notwithstanding the divine directions and commands to care for the poor, the Jews did most inhumanly oppress the poor. It became a proverb among them that the "rich ruleth over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender," and that "the poor was hated even of his own neighbor." The prophets poured solemn rebukes and awful denunciations upon the ears of the Jews in respect to their apostasy in this matter, from the true spirit of their religion. "The spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor, saith the Lord God of Hosts?"

Hence it was that the Prophets, when predicting the glorious influences of the gospel, and the blessings which the coming Messiah was to dispense, delighted in representing him as the friend of the poor. And so indeed he proved to be. When he came, he at once assumed this character, and called attention to this circumstance as indisputable proof of his divine mission. And a blessed and glorious day it was to the poor of this world, when the Son of God came down. They had become literally friendless among God's chosen people. Long before, had occasion been given for the proverbial saying among them, "That wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is separated from his neighbor," and that "all the brethren of the poor do hate him, how much more do his friends go far from him." And although they were commanded to open wide the hand, and were assured, that, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, that the Lord would deliver him in time of trouble—would preserve him, and keep him alive, and bless him in the earth, and not deliver him to the will of his enemies, and would strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, and make all his bed in his sickness; and were admonished that he that oppresseth the *poor* reproacheth his Maker, but he that hath mercy on the poor honoreth him; and were warned to rob not the poor, nor oppress the afflicted in the gate, for the Lord would plead their cause, and spoil the soul of them that spoiled them;" yet so utterly had they lost the spirit of their holy religion, when the compassionate Saviour came, that he sternly rebuked those who made the highest pretensions to sanctity, for devouring widows' houses, and eating up the substance of orphans. And so entirely had they made void the law of God, that the sentiment was prevalent that duty required of them to refrain from acts of kindness to the poor. For, setting up the false standard, that the *temporal* condition of an individual was the criterion of God's favor to him, they looked upon the poor and wretched as suffering the just displeasure of heaven, and the extending relief to them as interfering with the righteous retributions of an offended God. This forlorn condition of the poor was illustrated by our Saviour in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus may be regarded as the representative of the suffering poor of that day, and the treatment of the

rich man as illustrating the habitual feeling of the prosperous towards them. For though the poor beggar desired but the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, these were probably denied him, and he died of very starvation. Could the condition of the poor possibly be worse than it was among the favored people of God when their Saviour came? Oh, it was time for the compassionate Son of God to come, when the poor and the needy cried, and there was none to help. In him they found help—almighty help. All their friends and brethren had left them to pine and perish alone, but in him they found a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He made himself, when clothed with flesh, as one among the poorest of the poor.

Passing by the state of kings and all inferior grades of distinction and honor, so much valued and sought after by the men of this world, he took the form of the meanest condition, even that of a servant; and the poor first partook of the blessings he brought with him, and first recognized and acknowledged him as the Lord from heaven. Around him, whithersoever he went, the poor and the wretched were gathered, and he delighted, as in this appropriate business, to relieve their pains, to heal their diseases, to remove their infirmities, to soothe their anguish, to bind up their broken hearts, to pour into their unwonted ears gracious words of compassion and tenderness, to elevate their hopes, and to teach them to seek, and how to obtain the true riches. Yes, the gospel was now preached to the poor, and found among them its first and readiest acceptance.

The topics suggested by the text are—

I. *The special adaptation of the gospel to the poor, and,*

II. *The blessings it confers upon them.*

I. The special adaptation of the gospel to the poor.

1. There is one most important sense in which our text may be understood as embracing all mankind without distinction. All are *spiritually* poor and miserable and blind and naked. All are starving for the bread of life, and perishing for lack of knowledge. All have crying need of the spiritual blessings which the gospel confers, and it may be that this is the only sense in which the declaration is understood by the heavenly host. They contemplate man in his spiritual condition, and in his eternal relations. They see the state of all alike, ruined and hopeless. They make no account of the trivial and transitory distinctions of time. And therefore, when it was announced in heaven that the gospel was about to be preached to the poor, and they were dispatched with the thrilling news to earth, and bid convey it throughout the vast dominions of God's creation, awaking new and universal songs of praise to him, who had manifested so strange and surpassing an exhibition of love, they would understand in its widest sense as peace on earth and good will to *all* the inhabitants thereof.

It is an evidence of convincing force that the gospel is from heaven and not of men, that it contemplates man in his essential attributes as a spiritual, accountable and immortal being, and places no value upon temporal distinctions, and the pomp and glories of temporal prosperity.

We see in this an intelligence and a wisdom which, though not found in man, yet even his reason, darkened and perverted as it is, must admire and reverence as alone the unerring and the true. What are the petty distinctions, the honors, the various means of physical enjoyment, the elegances and refinements of affluent and cultivated society, and all the unsubstantial and transitory splendors which fortunate and prosperous man gathers round him to his spiritual and immortal nature? In real worth and duration they are no more to be compared with this than the glittering cobwebs of a summer's morning to the column of ever-during marble, around which they hang, and whose beauty and proportions they but soil and conceal.

2. The gospel teaches that man's real worth lies in his spiritual nature. All else is subordinate and temporary, and merely incidental. All its remedies and provisions are designed to act directly upon this part, to restore it to soundness, and fit it for a glorious and never-ending destiny. Its judgment is not, therefore, according to the outward appearance, but deals with every man alike as a naked individual. It has been a striking feature in human governments and human plans for the improvement of man's condition, to regard mankind in masses, and by orders, and grades, and castes, and to attach a value and confer a distinction, not according to each one's individual worth, but according to his prescribed relation to the state and the community. But the gospel individualizes every man. It contemplates him as an immortal intelligence, with capacities and relations that ally him to angels, and bind him to the throne of God. In this view it invests the meanest individual among the sons of man with an importance high as heaven, and with a grandeur awful as eternity. It has to do with the *eternal* verities of man's existence, and makes no provision for the flesh. It reduces all mankind to a level. It exalts the beggar, and brings low the monarch. The former is regarded as of equal value with the latter. He will exist for ever a fiend in hell or an angel in heaven. The latter can be no more nor no less.

But notwithstanding this general relation and adaptation of the gospel to all classes of the human race, there is clearly announced a special relation and adaptation to the poor of this world. The Son of God made himself one of the poorest of the poor. He first preached his gospel to the poor. His first disciples were taken from the poor. The history of pure Christianity, in all ages and countries, will testify that its most illustrious triumphs have been among the poor. There its heavenly graces have been most perfectly exemplified, and there have been given the brightest exhibitions of what the gospel can do for sinful and wretched men. It is expressly declared that God hath chosen the poor of this world, and we are informed of the divine design in this. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things which are, *that no flesh should glory in his*

presence." The mysteries of the gospel were hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes. Its blessings were withheld from the rich and the noble, and conferred upon the poor and despised, because such was the good pleasure of his will. He chose such materials for his gospel to operate upon, as would most signally display the workmanship of the divine hand. But there is a philosophy in this result that may not be unprofitably studied. When it is declared that the gospel is preached to the poor, there is a strong implication that they readily and gladly receive it. And this is showed to be the fact by the result. There is something in their very condition that makes the gospel welcome. They are friendless and portionless, and a sense of their destitution presses heavily upon their aching heart. Their circumstances are little calculated to foster pride and vanity and the love of the world. Their condition, with its habitual sense of want and other humiliating circumstances, presents no barrier to the pride-abasing and humbling doctrines of the gospel of Christ. Their very circumstances give a predisposition to listen to and accept offers of relief and consolation presented by the gospel. Having no earthly friends, will they not joyfully receive a friend from heaven? They have no portion here; will they not most thankfully accept an enduring inheritance beyond the grave? Will not they who are looked upon with a cold and scornful eye by this world, turn away from beholding its vanities, and lift their eyes and hopes to the unfading glories of an offered home in heaven? With the rich and great the case is different. Wealth makes many friends, and rank and fame are ever surrounded with admiring and applauding throngs. A delusive sense of fancied security shuts out of view their real destitution, and the glitter and glance of their possessions blind them to their intrinsic worthlessness. Not only so, but their circumstances exert a direct influence to unfit them to listen to such a message of the gospel. It is strikingly demonstrative of the utter depravity of man's heart, that the temporal favors of heaven, instead of drawing him by the cords of gratitude and love to their beneficent source, carry him further off, and bind him with a stronger chain to the base earth; instead of expanding the heart with benevolence, and raising it to a grateful contemplation of the all-bounteous Giver, they are made to nurture and strengthen its native selfishness. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, to which temporal prosperity is made to minister, throw around the soul an almost impenetrable shield against the spiritual influences of the gospel. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The process of amassing these perishable treasures, developes, strengthens and matures the covetous principle, until the whole soul is brought under the dominion of the rankest and at most incurable idolatry. How hardly shall they that receive honor from men be brought to believe on the name of the despised and crucified Jesus, and cherish that child-like spirit which is the only passport that admits into his heavenly kingdom!

The state and circumstances of the rich and great are therefore un-

favorable to the reception of a spiritual and humbling religion. Not that they are excluded by an ordination of heaven from a participation in its inestimable privileges and blessings. They are exhorted not to trust in uncertain riches, but to seek durable riches and righteousness. They are admonished that the friendship of the world is enmity to God. They are urged to seek the friendship of him, who, when earthly riches and honors and friends are swept away like gossamer before the autumnal blast, will sustain, and finally receive them to eternal mansions in the heavens. No. They exclude themselves. They have chosen their portion here. They are content with the good things of earth. They judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. But all are not so. Through all the blinding and stupefying influences which riches and honors throw around their possessors, the gospel has sometimes made its way to their hearts, and shown them that notwithstanding their outward state, they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Awaked to a sense of their true condition, they have turned away sickened with the vanities and delusions of earthly distinctions, and sought the imperishable gold and spotless raiment of the kingdom of God. And it is a goodly sight to see the rich and great laying aside their pomp and their pride, and bowing low at the foot of the cross, and consecrating themselves, with all their possessions and talents and influence, to the work of spreading over the earth the unsearchable riches of Christ.

How mistaken the notion that there is any degradation in all this! The religion of Jesus Christ alone clothes a man with true dignity, and confers real elevation of character. Its hallowing and refining influences give the highest grace and elegance to conspicuous and affluent state.

But it is still lamentably true, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are found among the humble and genuine disciples of Christ. But the poor of this world are there.

Let us consider,

II. The blessings which the gospel confers on the poor. They hear the gospel gladly, and well they may, for the blessings it confers upon them are unspeakable.

In discussing this part of our subject, we must speak of the blessings of the gospel in their general scope; but our remarks will have a particular significancy with reference to the poor, inasmuch as in their case these blessings are most conspicuously and signally manifested.

1. The gospel finds them utterly destitute and helpless, it leaves them enriched and glorified beyond all power of conception. "It raiseth the *poor* out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and make them inherit a throne of glory. Though they have lain among the pots, yet they are made as the wing of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The speaker approaches this part of his subject with an overpowering sense of his utter inability to discourse worthily of a theme so high and glorious. The strongest powers, aided by the

strongest language, are impotent to describe, in adequate phrase, the blessings of that gospel through which life and immortality are brough to light. It is a theme on which the boldest figures are tame, the loftiest rhetoric idle, and the highest exertion of human eloquence feeble. His lips must be touched with hallowed fire from off the eternal altar, and his hand skilled to sweep an angel's lyre, who would adequately extol those living and satisfying streams that flow from the unwasting fountain of truth and consolation.

Where shall we begin to speak of the blessings of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God"—a scheme which procures pardon to the guilty, sanctification to the polluted, light to the blind, joy to the sorrowing, and completely settles the controversy between man and his Maker, and joins them in eternal union? But, to be more particular,

2. Shall we tell of the treasures of knowledge the gospel unfolds? Through it alone life and immortality are brought to light. It alone sheds the light of eternity upon time, and communicates to fallen and degraded man all the *certain* knowledge he possesses, of the God who made him, of the Saviour who redeemed him, and of the destiny which awaits him. It exhibits the true character of that God, and of the relations we sustain to him. It informs us respecting the office and work of that Saviour in whom is all our hope, and of the fearfulness and eternal duration of that destiny.

3. It fully and satisfactorily answers that great question in comparison with which every other sinks into insignificancy, "How shall man be just with God?" It is alone the source of true and living knowledge, and is to the soul of man its eternal life. Compared with this knowledge all the brilliant and astounding discoveries of science, and all the rich and varied treasures of literature, and all the splendid and prodigious achievements of genius and learning, are utter foolishness. I beseech you, consider the FAITH which the gospel *inspires*. It is defined by the apostle to be "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It substantiates and appropriates all that is said and promised in the Bible. And now I ask the infidel to sit down with me and read over the great and precious promises, and all the glorious things uttered in the wondrous volume, and then tell me candidly if he does not think that a principle in the heart which *realizes* to itself all these things, and anticipates their full possession with joyous and exulting certainty, is a blessing worth having! Now this is the simple fact with thousands. He may say after all, these are but illusions; but they are not illusions to the believer. They are substantial realities, as much so as the objects he sees with his natural eyes. Well may such a faith enable the soul to overcome the world, breaking as it must the spell of sense, and the paralyzing power of "things seen and temporal," and surrounding it with the realities and sublimities, with the glories and joys of a spiritual and eternal state. How oft, upon the wings of this faith, has the humble and spiritually-minded Christian been borne away from earth up towards his heavenly home, until its splendors broke upon his enraptured vision, and its

eternal songs upon his ravished ear? The faith of the gospel, in lively exercise, does indeed produce in the soul "joy unspeakable and full of glory." O how blessed are God's chosen poor who are "rich in faith."

4. Consider again that good HOPE which the gospel gives. It is represented as "an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Yes, it is immovably fixed hard by the throne of God where stands for us our Forerunner. Attached to this anchor thus secured, the soul with all its eternal interests may rest with the most entire confidence. This security can never fail. The power of a mere earthly hope to cheer and invigorate the mind amid adverse and depressing circumstances is well known to all: its cheering ray darting across the dense gloom of despair will infuse new life and joy into those just ready to give up all in hopeless anguish. It is the great cordial for human wo. But this hope "perisheth at the giving up of the ghost," and leaves the soul just where its support and consolation are needed most. The hope of the gospel enters within the veil and lays hold on the eternal throne. Let earth and planets and suns and systems and all the material universe be rent into fragments, and swept down the gulf of annihilation; the soul, secured by the hope of the gospel, would be perfectly safe and unhurt amid this awful disruption and passing away into utter nothingness of the universal material frame of things. It would still hear a voice from the throne saying, "*Because I live thou shalt live also.*" What need has he who has this hope to care for the losses and calamities, the destitutions and afflictions of his present state? These are but for a moment; but the weight of glory on which his hope is fixed is "exceeding and eternal." And this *living* hope to which he is begotten will not leave him until it has put him in possession of the "incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance" which is reserved for him in heaven.

5. Consider yet again the LOVE of God which is shed abroad in the heart of the disciple of Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is something to be *felt*, but there is no language on earth, nor I suppose in heaven, which can describe it. It was never intended to be described. The attempt to do so would be profane. But it *is* a glorious reality which not only passeth the power of language, but "all understanding." It is a stream from that eternal fountain in the bosom of God that pours over heaven "fullness of joy and pleasures for ever more."

6. Think of the HOLINESS which the gospel produces. It not only effects the emancipation of the soul from the thraldom of sin—the fuel which feeds the fires of hell,—it leads it to the all-cleansing fountain of the Redeemer's blood, and washes it thoroughly from all sin's defilement, and makes it pure and spotlessly white. This is the perfection of bliss. Holiness is happiness. A holy soul cannot be unhappy, put it where you will. No! though you should kindle around it the fires of the pit, the sources of its joy would not be reached. It would

still be bathing in an ocean of bliss. It would everywhere behold the smiling face of a reconciled God.

All the *duties*, too, connected with a belief and profession of the gospel, however undesirable and irksome they may appear to the ungodly, are nevertheless, when performed aright, so many perennial springs of pure and ennobling enjoyments. The gospel's "ways *are* pleasant, and *all* her paths are peace." *The gospel is especially for the poor:* O what a change it brings over their prospects. But we have not yet seen the end. Let the pearly gates of the heavenly city be opened. Who are they "arrayed in white robes, with palms in their hands, and standing about the throne of God, and the Lamb?" They are the *poor* of this world, "who once were mourning here below," and have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them or any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. All these blessings are eternal in their duration. This gives them their highest value, and leaves nothing more to be needed by the boundless desires of the immortal spirit. Take away eternity from the blessings of the gospel, and, ineffably precious as they are, they would not satisfy the soul of man. Immortal in itself, it demands that its possessions, to be truly valuable, must bear the stamp of immortality. This demand is fully met in the gospel of the grace of God. Its blessings are not only eternal, but they will be for ever augmenting. They are perennial streams, which continually widen and deepen as they flow on. The crowns will grow brighter, the white robes more glittering, the harps will send out louder and sweeter tones, the beatific vision will become more and more ecstatic, while the long and the equal cycles of eternity roll. O ye poor and despised, envy no more the rich, but lift up your heads and reach forth your hands to the glorious prize which your Redeemer has purchased for you. And ye rich and great! turn off your eyes from beholding vanities. Humble yourselves and become poor in spirit, that ye may share with the "poor of this world, but rich in faith," the unsearchable riches of the heavenly inheritance.

THE SELF-FLATTERY OF SINNERS.

"Be not deceived."—Gal. vi. 7.

"WHEN a person has brought a stain upon his character and stands before the public in the attitude of a delinquent, the only way to regain his reputation and become restored to the confidence of his fellow-men, is to repair all injury as far as possible, and conduct himself discreetly in future. In this way, he may at length recover himself, and come to be regarded as a sound and valuable citizen. But if instead of reforming, he continues his irregularities, and says he shall still be respected, he deceives himself fatally, and is undone. The confidence of people shall no more be placed in him. He runs down and falls lower and lower, till finally he sinks in the deep waters of hopeless infamy and perpetual disgrace.

"So it is with the sinner in relation to the future, eternal state. He has already a stain upon him. He is a sinner; and to be a sinner, is to be a rebel against God. Now there is an opportunity to repent; and though he can never make amends for what he has done, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ he may be saved; and salvation implies everything that can make him blessed. But if he repent not, and do not believe in Christ; if he bless himself in his heart and say, 'I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart;' then the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against him.'

"I. Self-flattery in matters of religion is as certain ruin to the soul, as it is in matters of the world to reputation, where that has been injured. And to hope well, without reason, in temporal or spiritual things, is only to prepare the way for more poignant grief at the last. Yet this, alas, is often done. 'Let us not then be deceived; God is not mocked: For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

"2. Sinners know very well that their way is wrong. They are more or less disturbed in their sins. The law is written on their hearts, and the voice of conscience is not easily stifled. Sinners know they are guilty, and after all their self-flattery, have a thousand secret fears. In moments of sober reflection, even the stout-hearted tremble. They know God does not approve of sin, but requires them to repent of it. They try to keep up good courage, and to cheer each other's spirits, and for this purpose they often express their confidence in sentiments which, after all, they secretly distrust. This is what, on becoming penitent, they have often confessed,—that whilst they were indulging error, they had painful suspicions that all was not right, and that what they opposed might be the truth of God.

"3. Sinners know, too, that there is danger in their course. The idea

of danger is closely connected with that of sin. For God is a God of truth; and we naturally and justly conclude that, while wandering from the way of his appointment, we are exposed to his wrath. Sinners may flatter themselves that God is good, and therefore that they shall escape; but they cannot altogether forget that God is also holy and just, and will by no means clear the guilty. They feel alarmed in the midst of their conviviality and mirth. A dreadful sound is in their ears. A fearful foreboding frequently troubles them. When awakened, they often anticipate their doom.

"4. Yet, strange as it may seem, sinners prefer their course, and persist in it. I would it were not so. But are we not constrained to admit the fact? It meets us continually wherever we turn our eyes. Multitudes untold are to be found in the community, who are examples of what I here assert. They know they are sinners, and that till they repent and believe in Christ, they are in danger. Yet they move not a step towards repentance. They refuse admonition. Warnings from Providence and the word of God are slighted. They hear preaching, but go away and soon forget what manner of persons they are. They live as carelessly as ever, as much without prayer, and without communion with God. They view Christians with the same jealousy, and the same evil eye. They flatter themselves in their own eyes, and cry *peace, peace,* to their deluded souls.

"I have referred to the community in general; but may I not be more particular? Impenitent readers, how is it with you? Are you not convinced that your course is wrong, and that by continuing in it you are in danger? And have you not been warned, and admonished, and entreated in vain? Are you not, then, proof of what I am saying, that though sinners know a state of impenitence to be wrong and dangerous, still they persist in it? Alas! for it is so indeed. For why, if it is not so, have you not broken off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by turning unto the Lord? Why is the morning and evening sacrifice wanting in your families? And why does the place of personal retirement bear witness to your negligence? Be assured, if you were as you should be, things would be different with you. You would not be flattering yourselves in impenitence, while living in the neglect of Christ, and in the indulgence of what you know is wrong.

"5. Sinners in general flatter themselves that all will be well with them at last. If they do not, how can we account for it, that they should continue as they are? Could they rush on destruction as they do, if they did not flatter themselves, notwithstanding their convictions, that in some way they should escape? Their guilt and danger they know, and the hopeless state of the impenitent they dare not call in question; but for themselves they hope, that some way of deliverance will be opened. Say, sinner, if this is not the case; and if this thought, secretly indulged, be not the very thing which keeps you quiet. Could you remain so, if you admitted the truth in relation to yourself, with as little qualification as you do in relation to men in general? O, then, be undeceived! It is the deception of self-flattery that keeps you quiet

in your sins. And the Lord, we are assured, will not spare the self-flatterer, but his anger and his jealousy shall smoke against him, and all the curses that are written in the Holy Scriptures shall come upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.

"While sinners flatter themselves in their own eyes, judgments are preparing for them. The word and attributes of God, the honor of his law, and the welfare of his universal kingdom, all conspire to render their destruction sure, unless they repent. This must be the inevitable result; for God has settled it for ever in heaven, that no sinner, however he may flatter himself to the contrary, shall ever enjoy him, or be happy in his presence, without repentance and submission to his will.

"What then is it for a man to bless himself in his heart, and say, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart?' It is but to proclaim his own folly. It is but to prejudge and declare himself an heir of perdition. 'I can't repent and be sorry for my sins. I can't be serious and commence a life of prayer. I can't break off this and that habit, and forsake this and that vicious companion. I can't submit to certain doctrines and duties, so close and strict. I choose to live on as I am. I should be glad if it were different with me, but I hope for the best. At least, there are many worse than I am, and some who profess to be good, I suspect are no better.' Such is the language of one, and another, and in all of multitudes. But O, their end! Eternity will declare it. And then, when, in turn, God shall refuse to listen to their cry, as now they refuse his call, O, then, their doom will open! May the writer of these paragraphs, and he who shall read them, be preserved from the self-flattery of the impenitent, and from their awful end!"

WANTS OF THE SOUL.

"Time is the *present hour*,—the past is fled."

"Thus pass days, weeks, months, years, life. The immortal soul, with its ever expanding capacities, cries, give! give!! Short-sighted man gives chaff. The soul that on the bread of life would have thrived, attained a glorious maturity, and in due time been gathered like a shock of corn fully ripe to God's garner of glorified spirits, is famished in a dry and thirsty land. Its noble destination out of sight, it grovels in the dust, debases the image of its Maker, and assimilates to the spirits of the pit. Reader, is it thus with you? Are you of those

'Who vainly strive with earthly toys
To fill an empty mind.'

"Oh, stay, we entreat you; grant us not a careless hearing; it is for your life. How true, how emphatically true the line,

'It is not all of life to live.'

It is not a mere question of choice; you are bound to be happy. All mankind are bound to reflect honor upon our beneficent Creator by *rejoicing always* in Him. What then shall be said of those professors of his holy religion, who go mourning and complaining all their days? Might not our Saviour justly say, I know you not. My sheep know my voice, and I am known of mine. They know my voice; not merely in the sanctuary, and on the Sabbath day; they *always* know it. I lead them out, and they *follow* me. I make them to lie down in green pastures; I lead them beside the still waters. All those who drink of the water I give them, never thirst, but have in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life. In other words, they who put their trust in God; who are established on the rock Christ Jesus; who are rooted and built up in him; who partake of his spirit, are as Mount Zion; they cannot be moved; *cannot be moved!* Words are weak to express their steadfastness. Heaven and earth pass away. Reader, fasten your affections on ANY *created thing*, and they will vacillate; fasten them on things unseen, on God, and you shall not be moved; no, *never*. For as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear Him."

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SERMON CCCLXXIII.

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PHILADELPHIA.

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE DEPENDENT ON THE RELIGION OF PRINCIPLE FOR SUCCESS:

A Sermon Preached before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at Worcester, Mass., September 10, 1844.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." Luke xiv; 28—32.

It may be admitted that this passage of scripture originally had reference to the views with which an individual should enter on a religious life. With such a reference, it implies that he who becomes a follower of the Saviour should calmly and deliberately look at all the consequences of such an act, and be prepared to meet them. Men, in other things, act with prudence and forethought. They do not begin to build without a reasonable prospect of being able to finish. They do not go to war when there would be every prospect of defeat. It implies, also, that we are to expect difficulties in religion. It will demand of us a life of self-denial, and will involve a conflict with spiritual foes, and perhaps expose us to the enmity and scorn of the world. It implies, also, that there is a necessity of a calm and fixed purpose of soul in true religion, and that no man can properly enter on a religious life who does not resolve, by the grace of God, to struggle until the victory shall be achieved, and who has not confidence that there are resources sufficient to enable him to secure the triumph.

But still, though this was the primary meaning of the text, it is not departing from a fair interpretation of it, to make use of it with reference to the great purpose for which we are convened. Substantially the same principles in religion apply to an individual, and to the aggregate of individuals who compose the Christian church; to the one, in

securing his own salvation, and to the other, in the highest enterprise in which it can be engaged—that of spreading the gospel around the world. Thus applied, the text would mean that in this work there should be a calm survey of the strength and resources of the enemy, and of the means of overcoming him; that there should be a resolution to persevere in the work in the midst of all embarrassments; that it should be conducted under the direction of firm principle, and not by impulses and temporary excitements, and that it should be undertaken with a belief that the enterprise is practicable and that the ultimate success is certain.

A tower may be built from various motives, and different reasons may urge on the architect to the completion of his work. It may be prosecuted under the auspices of a settled plan, including all practicable estimates of the expense and time requisite for its construction, and of the obstacles to be overcome; or it may be hastily begun, with no proper sense of the expense and of the difficulties to be encountered, and carried forward by impulses, rather than by settled design. The architect may rear it as a place of refuge from an invading foe, or to perpetuate some illustrious deed in the history of his nation, and may be stimulated to complete it with the thought, "that the last object on the sight of him who leaves his native shore, and the first to gladden him who re-visits it, may be something which shall remind him of the liberty and glory of his country;" and with the "wish that infancy may learn the purpose of its erection from maternal lips, and that weary and withered age may behold it and be solaced with the recollections which it suggests."

A war also may be engaged in and conducted, from a great variety of motives. It may be a war of principle, where, though the immediate matter in issue may be of trifling importance, yet some great point is involved on which is suspended the liberty of a nation; or it may be a war commenced with the love of conquest, the desire of fame, and the purpose to extend the limits of empire. Its expenses may be met, and its perils may be encountered, because everything dear is at stake, or it may be rushed into under the impulse of excited feeling, and be sustained by the love of glory, and the hope of brilliant achievements. Settled principle; the love of country; ambition; the glare, and pomp, and splendor of military triumph, or a desire to humble a rival, may all be motives entering into the commencement or the prosecution of a war, and may all play their part in the perils and privations to which it is incident. The Saviour speaks of a tower built as the result of deliberate calculation; of a war prosecuted where the plan was calmly laid, and where the issue could not be regarded as doubtful.

It is the design of this discourse to show that the missionary enterprise is to be carried forward in a similar manner, not by impulses, but with deliberation and system; and that it must rely for success not on temporary excitements, not on the romance of missionary feeling, not on brilliant achievements, and not on the beauty and grandeur which may be thrown around the enterprise, but on the religion of settled principle.

It is presumed in the missionary enterprise that religion does not concern us as individuals only. It teaches us to look on our families, on our country, on the world. There are great things to be accomplished on the earth to which nothing else is adapted but religion. There are, indeed, valuable objects which can be secured by education, by science, by good government, by commercial regulations, by treaties of peace, by the wholesome influence of laws. Valuable as these things are, however, there are interests pertaining to men of greater magnitude which they can never secure, and which are reserved for the influence of religion alone. No advancement in the organizations of social life; no progress in the physical sciences; no improvement in the methods of education; no perfection which the science of government or jurisprudence can reach, can accomplish the objects which it has been reserved for religion to secure. There is a field which is entirely its own; and no encroachment has been made on its prerogatives by any advance in the other departments of human influence and action. Those objects relate to such points as the following—the renovation of the human heart, the imparting of peace to a guilty conscience, the reconciliation of the alienated soul to God, support in times of trial and in the hour of death, the elevation of debased and degraded communities to the enjoyment of equal rights, the emancipation of the soul from the fetters of superstition, and the diffusion over the earth of the knowledge and worship of the Creator. Into this sacred and wide circle of influences other things enter not with power sufficient to accomplish the great results desired, and however much they may be made tributary to these objects when kept subordinate, the power which is to achieve the result is religion.

It is also presumed that there are great and undeniable evils existing upon the earth which can be removed only by religion. Those evils are not removed by victories achieved in battle, however brilliant they may be, for the triumph decreed to the conqueror furnishes no evidence that the moral and social evils of mankind have been in the least diminished by the success of arms. They are not wholly remedied by science and education. Valuable as the discoveries of science, and the teachings of education are, yet there are evils in the human condition which the perfecting of the telescope, and the measuring of the dimensions and distances of the stars, and the analysis of minerals, do not remove. The knowledge of the chemical properties of alcohol does not of necessity reform the drunkard, nor will the most thorough scientific acquaintance with its effects on the human frame save the well-educated youth from a drunkard's grave. They are not remedied by outfits for discovery, nor in exploring foreign regions can we find a cure for human ills. The traveller to distant lands brings back no knowledge that will remove the evils of his own, nor will his passage through those lands for scientific purposes remove the evils there. They are not remedied by political changes. Such changes occur in a higher region, and the great and far-spread ills which affect the mass of mankind are little more influenced by them than the condi-

tion of the vapors in an humble vale is affected by the storm in the higher regions of the air. The tempest sweeps along the Appenines; the lightnings play and the thunders utter their voice, but still the malaria of the Campagna is unaffected, and the pestilence reigns there still. So with most of the evils that affect mankind. The malaria remains settled down on the low plains of life, and scarcely is the surface of the pestilential vapor agitated by all the storms and tempests of political changes. Under all the forms of despotism; in the government of an aristocracy, a republic, or a pure democracy; and in all the revolutions from the one to the other, the evil remains the same. There are evils in the world which have survived all political changes, and which are destined to live until they are reached by some more efficient reforming power than mere political revolutions. Great evils among the Greeks survived all changes in the government. Such evils lived among the Romans substantially the same under the Tarquins, the Consuls, and the Cæsars; when the Tribunes gained the ascendency, and when the Patricians crushed them to the earth. They lived in more modern Europe when the Northern hordes poured down on the Roman empire, and when the Caliphs set up the standard of Islam in the Peninsula. They lived in all the revolutions of the middle ages, alike when spiritual despotism swayed a sceptre over the nations, and when they began to emerge into freedom. Under the British rule they lived in the time of the Stuarts, during the Protectorate, and under the administration of the House of Hanover. In all the fierce contests for rule in this land; in the questions about changes of administration, there are evils which are no more affected, whichever political party gains the ascendency, than the vapor that lies in the valley is by all the changes from sunshine to storm on the summits of the Alps or the Andes. Such changes are to be wrought only by the influence of religion.

To effect these changes, there are the following kinds of religion upon the earth—on one or all of which, reliance is to be placed—that of Sentiment, that of Form, that of Feeling, and that of Principle.

The Religion of Sentiment is founded on the beautiful and grand in the works of nature, or in the scenes of redemption. It finds pleasure in the contemplation of the starry heavens, of hills, and streams, and lakes; of the landscape and of the ocean; and is willing in these things to admire and praise the existence of the Creator. In the contemplation of these things, there is no reluctance to admit the existence of a God, or to dwell on his natural perfections; for in the placid beauty of a landscape, in the silvery murmuring of a rivulet, and in the opening of the rose-bud, no attribute of the Deity is revealed on which the mind, even of the gay and the wicked, is unwilling to dwell. This religion is found in all the departments of poetry, and in all the conceptions of mythology. It most abounded among the Greeks, a people who carried the love of the beautiful to a higher pitch than any other, and who embodied it in the conceptions of their "elegant mythology," and in their unequalled works of art, illustrative of that mythology.

Over each of the works of nature; over every element and every event; over each tree, and flower, and breeze, and waving field, and running fountain, they supposed a divinity to preside, and the art of the chisel and the harmony of verse were employed to embody and perpetuate their conceptions. It is impossible that the religion of the beautiful should be carried to higher perfection than it was at Athens. The character of the people led to it—as the character of a people always gives form to their religion, or is reciprocally moulded by it.

This is still the religion of poetry and romance, and over a large portion of the world, claiming particularly to be ranked among the refined and the intellectual, it maintains its dominion. The names, indeed, which were used by that refined and elegant people with so much propriety to express their conceptions, are employed no more. Statues of breathing marble no longer embody those conceptions, but the notions of the divinity differ little from the conceptions of Grecian mythology. The heaven to which they look forward, differs little from the Elysian fields. That which is needful to prepare for that world, differs little from the kind of virtues which a refined Athenian deemed necessary to fit him for the world of beauty and of joy to which he looked forward.

Delighting too in the beautiful, this religion may find a species of pleasure in the scenes and events of redemption. There is much in the Bible which the religionist of this description may admire, and such admiration may be mistaken for true Christian piety. There is no book which has more to gratify the taste for the beautiful and the sublime than the Bible. When the scholar can overcome his reluctance to look into it because it is a *religious* book, there is no book in which he will find more to meet all that a scholar loves than there. There is no department of poetry, if we except the Epic—which was not consistent with the design of the book, and the dramatic—which was either unknown to the Hebrews, or regarded as perilous to virtue, which may not be found in the most exquisite form in the sacred Scriptures. The world may be challenged to produce specimens of elegiac lyric and pastoral poetry that can be compared with that which is found in the poetry of David; and for sublimity of thought and language, Isaiah confessedly outpeers all that was ever produced out of the land of Palestine.

This delight in the beautiful—in the religion of sentiment—may be carried farther than this. It may find a kind of pleasure in the peculiar scenes of redemption, and in the enterprise and romance of carrying the gospel to distant nations. "I confess," said Rousseau, who, more than any other man, has illustrated the nature of this religion, "that the sanctity of the gospel is an argument which speaks to my heart, and I should regret to find any good answer to it. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their pomp; how little they appear by the side of this! Can it be that a book, at once so sublime and so simple, should be the work of man? Can it be that the person whose history it relates, was a mere man? Is such the manner of an enthu-

siast, or a mere sectarian? What sweetness, what purity in his deportment! What touching kindness in his instructions! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What promptness, what ingenuity, and what pertinence in his replies! What entire command of his passions! Where is the man—where the sage, who can act, suffer and die without weakness, and without ostentation? Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a Sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God!" This religion, too, aims to hide what is repellent in the stern character of justice in God; turns away the thoughts from future wrath; adores the divinity within man; regards it as the great object of religion to raise him up to the perfection of his nature; would conceal all that is repulsive in the grave, and goes forth to beautify the tomb with the charms of nature and of art, to make the grave itself a pleasant place of repose—"the last device of man, without religion, to get rid of the fear of death." The faith of this class of religionists is recorded on marble monuments, and proclaimed in obituaries and eulogies. If we may credit such records, heaven is made up of poets and philosophers; of warriors and statesmen; of the amiable, the refined and the gay; of the beautiful and the accomplished; of those who have lent a charm to society by their wit, or diffused happiness through halls of pleasure by the sweetness of their manners.

The Religion of Forms is founded on different things. It has been the prevailing religion of the world, and there is no other to which the great mass of men have so strong a tendency. In the time of the Saviour, it had become the prevalent religion of the Hebrews, and found ample gratification in the gorgeous rites of the temple service. The Saviour aimed to introduce in its place a religion of simple spirituality—with no gorgeous rites, no splendid ritual, no imposing ceremonies. Scarcely, however, had the last of the Apostles died, before in the very churches planted by their hands, the last remains of spirituality had disappeared, and in the rites and ceremonies which had been borrowed from Judaism or Paganism, all that had contributed to sustain formalism in the Pagan world was introduced entire into the Christian church. Thenceforth, for centuries of night, Christianity became a religion of forms. Ages rolled by. Luther, Farel, Zuingle, Calvin, rose. They drew off the true church, and restored the spirituality of the gospel, and all that was left was, and continued to be, a religion of forms. But the tendency to this kind of religion was not effectually checked. It still lives, and it requires all the influence of advancing intelligence, of the spirit of liberty, of revivals of religion, and of the withering rebukes of Providence, to check it; and despite all these, nothing is more apparent than the tendency to forsake all that is spiritual in Christianity, and to relapse into the religion of forms.

This kind of religion relies on the efficacy of prescribed forms of devotion in conveying grace to the soul, rather than on simple truth applied by the Holy Spirit. It has an extraordinary respect for tradition, as if wisdom died with the fathers, and they had authority to prescribe rites and ceremonies in the church. It looks with diminished

respect on the Bible as the great fountain of truth, and as embodying the doctrines which convert and save, and relies much on truth supposed to be conveyed through other channels. In this religion, a superior sanctity is attributed to men made more holy by office than the rest of their brethren, and appointed to convey grace to the soul. The efficacy of the truths of the gospel is not secured by any intrinsic power which they possess, or by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit on the soul, but because they are conveyed in the channel of a ministry of regular succession. The sanctity of those through whom grace is conveyed is not in the men but in the office; it is not in clean hands and hearts, but in an unbroken succession; it is not moral, but official worth; it is not excellence arising from superior mental or moral endowments, or from a greater degree of industry or deadness to worldly influences, but that which imparts or indicates official superiority in the view of the mass of mankind. There is grace conferred in ordination; grace in the sacraments rightly administered; grace in absolution; grace in ordinances administered at the bed-side of the sick and dying. This mode of religion regards certain places, and scenes, and times as holy above others, and as somehow conveying grace to the soul. It consecrates temples, churches, chapels and altars, and regards them as possessing a mysterious holiness. From a consecrated shrine goes forth a sanctifying power which could be secured in no other place, and which works as a charm in subduing sin and saving the soul. The place where the dead repose is holy, and a mystic virtue securing salvation encircles those who are buried there. From such a place the grossly wicked are excluded, and all others sleep there with the hope of a blessed resurrection. 'There is a religion that worships God, and another that worships the altar; a religion that trusts in Christ, and another that trusts in the sign of the cross, the wafer, and holy water; a religion that brings every thought into subjection by love, and a religion that bows down the soul under the weight of ceremonies and binds its freedom by numberless rites; a religion of broad phylacteries, and of cleansing the outside of the cup and the platter, and of garnishing the tombs of the prophets, and a religion of cleansing the heart, and of reliance on the simple efficacy of truth, and of making the soul pure before God; a religion where grace is conveyed to the sinner by human hands and in the apostolic line, and a religion where grace is conveyed by the direct influence of the Holy Ghost; there is a religion whose justification, and whose material, external and internal, is form, and a religion whose whole essence is faith on the Son of God.'

The Religion of Feeling or Emotion differs from those of Sentiment and of Forms. It is not founded in the love of the beautiful or the grand in the works of nature or of redemption, and is not satisfied with that which has power merely to charm and allure. It does not attempt to substitute form for spirituality, for it is often of a highly spiritual nature, and may have the most thorough contempt for forms. It lives by whatever excites the affections, appeals to the sympathies

of the soul, or opens the fountains of tears. It measures religion, not by the amount of truth embraced, or by the calmness and consistency of a holy life, or by the strength of principle evinced in resisting temptation or in carrying forward great enterprises against organized opposition, but by the amount of excitement which can be secured, and the joy that can be made to flow into the soul. Emotion, not principle, becomes the prompter to religious duty; happiness the gauge by which the amount of piety is determined. The facility in shedding tears at the remembrance of sin, or at the cross, is the evidence of repentance; joy in the belief that sins are forgiven is the proof of conversion. That preaching is of the right kind which excites the passions; those appeals only are conformable to the gospel which wake up the tumultuous feelings of the soul; and religion in a community or in the heart of an individual, is not the dew gently falling each night on the meadow, but the shower descending at uncertain intervals; it is not the stream calmly and constantly flowing, or the fountain ever bubbling, but a succession of jets irregular in the time of their bursting forth, but beautiful; it is not the calm glory of the sun, but the sudden and ravishing brilliancy of the meteor. This religion lives, not in settled convictions of truth and of duty, but in emotions, and tears, and raptures.

The Religion of Principle is different from either of those which have been specified, though it will embrace whatever is excellent in either of them or all. In common with the Religion of Sentiment, it may have a clear perception of the beautiful and the grand in the works of God and in the scenes of redemption. In common with the Religion of Forms, it will be the patron of order, and will show all due respect for sacred places, and times, and modes of devotion. In common with the Religion of Feeling, it will cultivate the affections of the heart, and tends, more than any other religion, to produce tender sensibility and warm emotions. It refuses not to shed tears at the remembrance of sin, and in view of the sufferings of the Saviour; it weeps over the wants and woes of the world; it is filled with joy in view of pardoning mercy, and it bursts forth into praise when the Redeemer's kingdom is advanced on the earth But it does not consist wholly of these things. It is founded on the intelligent adoption of a rule of right, and on a steadfast adherence to it. This rule is adopted, not from whim, caprice, or custom, or civil authority, but because it is believed to be the will of God. It is adopted, not because it is beautiful; not because it can be wrought into poetry; not because it will contribute to popular favor; but because it is true. It may appear rough and rugged, harsh and severe; it may infringe on many customs in society, or even on the laws of the land; it may require that our strong natural feelings should be suppressed, and that the tender ties which bind us to country and home, should be severed, that we may go and do our duty to our Saviour in a foreign land; but the will of God is regarded as final in the case.

It is not, in such a religion, a question that is asked whether the matter at stake be of great or little value, or whether what is done will be blazoned abroad or will be unknown. What is done will be done

because it is *right*, not because it is beautiful or grand, or will be emblazoned by fame; what is resisted will be opposed because it is *wrong*, not because the evil is of vast magnitude, and the resistance will immortalize the man. To those who do not well understand the nature of religion, this kind of religion often seems to be an obstinate adherence to trifles, and is set down as fanaticism; yet it need not be said, that a *principle* is often tested by what seems to be a small matter, as the mass of gold is tested by the assay of the smallest portion. In the beginning of the American Revolution, it was not the *amount* of the tax that was attempted to be levied; it was the question whether the British Parliament had a right to tax the Colonies without their consent at all; and this could as well be determined by a single sheet of stamp paper, a single pound of tea, or a single box of glass, as by an attempt to support all the expenses of the government by drains from the Colonies.

As an illustration of the Religion of Principle, I may refer to an incident which occurred in our history, and which may show the manner in which all who are descended from those referred to, should embark in every enterprise connected with religion. The "Mayflower"—a name now immortal—had crossed the ocean. It had borne its hundred passengers over the vast deep, and after a perilous voyage had reached the bleak shores of New England in the beginning of winter. The spot which was to furnish a home and a burial-place, was now to be selected. The shallop was unshipped, but needed repairs, and sixteen weary days elapsed before it was ready for service. Amidst ice and snow, it was then sent out, with some half-a-dozen pilgrims, to find a suitable place where to land. The spray of the sea, says the historian, froze on them, and made their clothes like coats of iron. Five days they wandered about, searching in vain for a suitable landing-place. A storm came on; the snow and the rain fell; the sea swelled; the rudder broke; the mast and the sail fell overboard. In this storm and cold, without a tent, a house, or the shelter of a rock, the Christian Sabbath approached—the day which they regarded as holy unto God; a day on which they were not to "do any work." What should be done? As the evening before the Sabbath drew on, they pushed over the surf, entered a fair sound, sheltered themselves under the lee of a rise of land, kindled a fire, and on that little island they spent the day in the solemn worship of their Maker. On the next day their feet touched the rock, now sacred as the place of the landing of the Pilgrims. Nothing more strikingly marks the character of this people than this act, and I do not know that I could refer to a better illustration, even in *their* history, showing that theirs was the Religion of Principle, and that this religion made them what they were. The whole scene—the cold winter—the raging sea—the driving storm—the houseless, homeless island—the families of wives and children in the distance, weary with their voyage, and impatient to land—and yet, the sacred observance of a day, which they kept from principle and not from mere feeling, or because it was a form of religion,—shows how deeply imbedded true religion is in the soul, and how little it is affected by surround-

ing difficulties. In matters indifferent, and not enjoined by the high authority of God, this religion is gentle as the breathings of an infant, and yielding as the osier or the leaf of the aspen; in all that is commanded, all that is a matter of duty, all that pertains to the law of God, it is like an oak on the hills. There it stands—its roots fixed deep in the earth, and perchance clasping some vast rock below the surface; its long arms stretched out, and its upright trunk defying the blast. There it stands the same—whether the sun shines calmly on it, or whether the heavens gather anger, and pour upon it the fury of the storm. It is on this kind of religion, that, under the divine blessing, we are to rely in the work of Christian Missions.

The great objects contemplated by religion in the world, cannot be secured by the Religion of Sentiment. I mean, that we cannot place reliance on that in effecting what Christianity is undoubtedly designed to accomplish in fulfilling the great command of the Saviour to publish his gospel in all lands.

That in the theory of a missionary enterprise there may be much attractive beauty, and much that would commend itself to this kind of religion, there can be no doubt. There *is* a beauty, a charm, a romance, a "high emprise," a manifest benevolence, and an acting out of the feelings of brotherhood, in such an undertaking, which would accord well with this species of religion. Whatever is beautified, romantic, grand, agrees with its nature; and whatever of external glory may be thrown around this great enterprise, may be expected to awaken sympathetic feeling in the bosom of its votaries. In the missionary cause, viewed from the scenes of quiet and of ease in a Christian land, there may be much which we should expect would make no appeal to this kind of religion. The glory of exploring unknown regions; of studying nature there in forms which we have never seen; of surveying man in modes of living, of opinion, and of laws which have the charm of novelty to us; the glory of being the first to convey there the results of science, and of causing the flowers of literature to bloom in hitherto barren wastes; the glory of carrying there the triumphs of the healing art, and of founding asylums and hospitals; the glory of unloosing the fetters of bondage, of giving to man as an intellectual and moral being the rank which he was designed to have in the scale of being, and of diffusing over lands now barren the beauties which "smile on a Scottish or New England landscape;" the glory of founding schools and colleges, and of seeing pure temples rise to the honor of God, may have a charm in the view of one all whose religion is the Religion of Sentiment, and in such an enterprise all that there *is* in that religion we may suppose would be gratified. To such an one it might be supposed that the missionary cause would present itself as the noblest in which man can engage.

And so it does in theory. But the romance of missions soon dies away, and with it all the zeal of such religionists in the cause. It becomes not a thing of ideal beauty but of sober reality, and demands

other principles to sustain it than the love of the beautiful or the grand To leave one's country and home and friends for ever; to bid adieu to the comforts and refinements of a Christian land; to mingle ever onward with savages on whose souls "fair science never dawned;" to witness their degradation; to partake of their fare; to originate among them the first notions of social order, decency and taste; to labor on from year to year and see scarcely any progress made; to be poor, and to be forgotten by the mass of mankind, and to be sick in a far distant land, friendless and alone, and to die there and be buried with perhaps not a friend to weep, and not a stone to mark the spot—all this is a trial to which the mere admiration of the beautiful in religion is not adapted to prompt the soul. The religion of sentiment does not find its home in such scenes. On the soft couch of luxury, in scenes of refined social life, in the drawing-room, in the banqueting hall, or in the gorgeous temple of religion, is its appropriate abode. There, adapting itself to whatever is refined and courteous in social life; engaged in the pursuits of elegant literature or in the arts; the patron of whatever is urbane and courteous; and diffusing a sweet charm over life, and making lovely the face of society, it meets the instinctive desires in the human bosom of *a* religion of some kind, and it keeps the conscience at ease. But it is not adapted to such rough and perilous scenes as the Apostles engaged in, and such as are inseparable from the life of a modern missionary.

There is not enough in this religion to sustain those who are willing to peril their lives in such a cause. To prosecute this cause is to be a work of steady sacrifice and self-denial. It is to pursue the steady plan amidst the coolness of friends and the opposition of foes. It is to embark in it, expecting that life will close before it is completed, and that future generations will prosecute and complete it. Now there is no mere love of the beautiful in religion that will do this. There is no protracted charm of romance that will do it. There can be no such illusive splendor thrown over the enterprise as to make a father willing to part with the son whom he has carefully trained, or to press to his bosom for the last time his daughter, that their lives may be spent far away in heathen lands—to labor, perchance, without sympathy there; to be sick, with neither father nor mother to sustain them; and to die, and be buried, and forgotten there. Great enterprises for the melioration of the world depend for success on sterner principles than this. "It is not by flowers and verses, by declamations on the beauty of spring and the goodness of the Deity," by the love of adventure, and the charm of novelty, that the soul is to be supported when called to part with earthly comforts, and to meet with persecution or neglect. No mere sentimental feeling led Howard to gauge the misery of the prisons of Europe, and to inhale their pestilential air; no mere admiration of the loveliness of freedom led Clarkson and Wilberforce to devote their days and nights to the relief of the oppressed African; and no romance in the struggles for freedom could have induced Hancock and Adams to peril their lives and their fortunes in the cause of Amer-

ican freedom. Accordingly, the religion of sentiment has never given birth to missions. The Grecian sage, in whose bosom this religion found its most congenial home, made no efforts to carry it abroad. He was content to impart a knowledge of its beauties in the Academy, or to transmit it in the 'mysteries;' and though Solon and Pythagoras crossed seas and deserts to *gain knowledge* in other lands, they made no journeys to secure proselytes to their religion there. The Sadducee, who, among the Hebrews, was the type of this religion as it exists in other lands, originated no missions, and submitted to no sacrifices, that his views might be propagated among the nations of the earth. Rousseau contemplated no mission to those on whom the beauty of religion, as seen by him, had never dawned; and the Theophilanthropist was content to strew flowers on the altars which he had erected in Paris, and to deliver homilies on the beauties of morality there, with no attempt to shed this light on the darkened souls of the heathen. No transcendentalist leaves the calm retreats of the academic grove to fix his abode in Caffraria or New Zealand; nor among all those who are so charmed by the beauty of religion, by the purity of the precepts of Christ, and by the moral perfection of his character, but who deny his atonement; so loud in proclaiming the perfectibility of man, and so eloquent in praise of that gospel which has brought life and immortality to light, but who deny the absolute depravity of the race, and the necessity of the new birth; so much in love with a religion which gives a superior cultivation to the intellect, and a charm to manners in social relations, but who see no attractiveness in the severer views of the evangelical system, has a mission to the heathen ever been originated and sustained. Of all this class there is not now a single missionary to propagate these views in any heathen land, nor does all the zeal with which these views are defended at home, nor the eloquent descriptions of the elevating tendency of that religion and its adaptedness to remove the evils which afflict our race, prompt to a single effort to rear a temple in honor of that religion on a pagan soil.

Equally true is it that the Religion of Forms is not adapted to such an enterprise. It cannot be denied that it has some advantages for such a work, above the religion of sentiment, and that this religion has given birth to enterprises involving sacrifice and self-denial which would be an honor to any cause. It cannot be denied that it has often turned its attention to Christian Missions, and that powerful organizations have been formed, and are still in operation, under its auspices, contemplating the spread of a species of Christianity among those who are "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." No man will hesitate to attribute the praise of a burning zeal to Xavier; and the sacrifices and self-denials of Brebeuf, and Raymbault, and "the delicate Lallemand" among the North American Indians, have gone into the permanent records of history. From such sacrifices and self-denials, I do not intend to deny that the missionaries of a purer gospel may learn many an invaluable lesson, nor should the praise which is due to heroic ardor be withheld from their memory. For such zeal in-

spired by the religion of forms, it would not be difficult to account, but it is easy to see that the great object contemplated by the Saviour, can never be secured under the auspices of such a religion. The attachment for a religion of forms seizes with such power on the soul, that they who are devoted to it are willing to make great sacrifices in its defence, and even to become martyrs in spreading it through the world. It has a power which is never found in the religion of sentiment, for it regards religion as a momentous thing, and deems it essential to the salvation of man. Such is the sense of the value of religion; so deep becomes the conviction that this particular kind of religion is essential to salvation; so exclusive is it in its very nature, and perhaps, too, so strong is the love of power, and the desire of a wide dominion unconsciously substituted for religion, that it may summon the mightiest energies of the soul for its diffusion, and boast of a catalogue of martyrs as extended as any other. The Pharisees, the great type of this kind of religion all over the world, compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and it is not strange that the same kind of religion should produce the same zeal in every age and country.

But what will be the real objects aimed at under such auspices? What will be the effect on the converts made? The Saviour said, in reference to a convert made by enterprises of this nature, "and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves."—Matth. xxiii, 15. They who engage in such enterprises will be the patrons and advocates of a religion of forms wherever it may be found, and will endeavor to adopt these forms and accommodate them to their own religion, as if the work were to convert forms to new names, rather than to convert the souls of men. In the systems of the heathen, there are many forms of religion, which only need a new name, and new associations, to become all that is contemplated in a religion of Christian forms. Let a Christian name be given to a heathen temple; let the existing heathen priesthood, even without a change of vestments, be baptized and adopted into the ranks of a Christian priesthood; let the altar on which heathen sacrifices have long ascended, remain and be re-consecrated, still to be an altar in a Christian temple; let the incense continue to be wafted by other hands; let baptism be substituted in the place of ablutions; let the worship of canonized Christian martyrs be substituted in the place of that of heroes; let the days consecrated to the memory of the gods become days to commemorate the virtues of the saints; and let the reverence for a sacred order of men, and for sacred places, temples, shrines, and burial-places remain unchanged, and the work of missions contemplated by a religion of forms is accomplished. The heart is unconverted. The mind is debased and degraded still. There has been the transfer of a *religion*, not the regeneration of *a soul*; a conversion of rites and ceremonies, not the renewal of the alienated human heart. The gain has been in enrolling a name among the outward friends of Christianity, not in recording it in the book of life. In the sixth century, it is said that Gregory sent to Britain, ordering that, for the accommodation and

allurement of the pagans, and to make Christianity sit easy upon them, the days on which they had been accustomed to sacrifice to the gods, should be appointed as festivals of the saints, and so the populace be allowed to bring and kill their victims, and perform their sacrifices as usual. If, in enterprises of this kind, the gospel should be sent to those among whom the forms of Christianity already have an existence, the purpose will be to become identified with those forms, and perhaps to make common cause against a purer and simpler religion. The grand aim will not be to breathe the pure spirit of religion again into those dead forms, but to express towards them a fraternal feeling, to trace out the features of resemblance and consanguinity, and to glory that a new argument is found in a collateral line for the apostolical succession. On such a religion, therefore, we cannot depend for the conversion of the world to God.

Equally clear is it that we cannot rely on the Religion of Feeling or Emotion. The reasons of this are too obvious to make it necessary to enter into a formal statement of them.

There is enough in the condition of the world to excite the deepest emotion, and to appeal to all the tender sensibilities of the soul. By no one, with whatever talent he may have been endowed to work upon the sympathies of mankind, has the description of human misery been overdrawn. We may be certain that such descriptions never go beyond the reality, and that, when in view of human guilt and wretchedness, our eyes run down with tears, the emotion is not caused by imaginary woes. There is ignorance and misery in every heathen community so deep as to secure us against the possibility of ever being reproached for weeping over fancied sorrows. The descriptions of the widow burning on the funeral pile; of children devoted to the Ganges; of the Hindu swinging on hooks; of infanticide in China, and in the islands of the South Sea; of the painful postures of the Brahmin; of the sickening scenes in the festivals in honor of Juggernaut; of human sacrifices, and of the debasing vices of the heathen world, over which our hearts bleed when our brethren return from distant lands and tell us what they have seen, are all drawn from reality, and we need not apprehend that they are over-colored. When the Christian has wept over these things in his closet, there has been occasion for his tears; and when the great congregation has been held in breathless stillness by a description of heathenism by one who has come to tell us of this wo and degradation, there has been occasion for all our sympathy. It was right to weep. It was what the Saviour did when on earth he looked on dying men; it is what he would do if he dwelt among us now.

But can we depend on this sympathy, this mere emotion, in the enterprise of carrying the gospel around the world? There are great laws of our nature which forbid it. God has made us creatures of sympathy and of feeling to prompt us to action where something is to be done for which it would not be safe to rely on cool reflection, but not with reference to enterprises which demand years or ages for their

fulfilment. We console the sufferer, we relieve the afflicted, we press through the flames or plunge into the stream to rescue a child from death, prompted by instantaneous emotion where reason would be too slow to come to the aid of the sufferer. When the pestilence breathes through a land, or the earthquake engulphs cities and towns, we at once, under the influence of feeling, open our hands and hearts for the relief of the sick and the dying, prompted to it so soon that cold avarice may not prevent the exercise of sacred charity. From the same law of our nature, we open our doors to receive the wounded soldier, and spread for him a couch on which to die. But we consult about the constitution of a republic; we found colleges and schools; we lay down an iron road, or dig a canal, or construct a break-water; we endow a hospital or an asylum that shall diffuse blessings over distant generations, under different auspices. These things depend on a different law of our being, and appeal to different principles of our mental constitution; nor could the foundation of emotion be raised so high as to make it the basis of a calculation that these great objects could ever be secured.

There is another law of our nature which shows that, in securing these objects, you cannot depend on feeling or emotion. To secure the promptings produced by emotion, the object must be before you, or must be so vividly painted that you see it as a reality. As long as it acts, it must be in the eye. But how could that object of pity be kept so steadily in the eye amidst the necessary business and the allurements of life as to prompt to steady action? How can the image of distress be so constantly before us as always to affect the heart? The circumstances of our being forbid it; and even if it were always there, the laws of our nature would make us soon cease to be affected by it. Soon, for our nature cannot bear long excitement, we learn to look on scenes of wo without emotion. We go into a hospital and shed not a tear; we walk over a battle-field, strewed with the dying and the dead, without emotion; we hear the piteous wail of the beggar without concern; and we should soon learn to look upon the sufferings of the whole heathen world, without being prompted to any great effort for their relief. The cry, too, that comes from the heathen world, is distant. It almost dies away before it reaches our ears; and when the vibrations come to our atmosphere, they are so driven from their direction, and so drowned in the hum of business, that they reach not the ears of the great mass of those who call themselves Christians, and we continue to urge on the affairs of commerce, and ambition, and pleasure, as if not a heathen had a soul to be saved. You cannot depend, then, on the religion of feeling or emotion to accomplish the great purpose contemplated by Christian missions.

But if you can depend on neither of these kinds of religion, there remains but one other source of reliance. It is

THE RELIGION OF PRINCIPLE.

We shall see its value, by a brief specification of particulars in reference to the nature of the work to be accomplished.

First, it is an enterprise stretching into coming ages. It is not expected, unless it be by a few visionary men, to be accomplished in a single generation. They who embark now in the enterprise for converting the world, do not dare to hope that they will see its consummation. They expect to be withdrawn from the field before the standard of victory waves on the ramparts of the enemy, and perhaps before a single blow is struck that shall make his strongholds tremble. The laurels which they hope to wear are not those which shall be conferred as the result of the final triumph, and whatever banners they may see floating 'when their eyes shall be turned to behold the sun in heaven for the last time, they do not even hope to see, what they believe will yet be seen, the banners of salvation, all covered with living light, floating over the sea and the land, and in every wind under the whole heaven,' in demonstration that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. That sight will be reserved to greet and bless other eyes here below. *They* will see it when they shall look down from the battlements of heaven; or, if from those heights they cannot look upon the earth where they dwelt, and toiled, and prayed, they expect to learn that the victory is achieved from those who shall come up redeemed out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, under the heaven, to mingle their hallelujahs before the throne.

There is not upon the earth an enterprise commenced whose completion stretches so far into futurity, or which makes so large a calculation on the fidelity of coming ages, as the Missionary cause. In most of the undertakings in which we engage as individuals, we hope to see the completion ourselves. Of the orchard that we plant, we hope to eat the fruit; in the house that we are building, we hope to dwell; the avails of the commercial adventure in which we embark, we hope to enjoy; the land from which we cut away the primeval forest, we hope to see covered with the golden harvest; and in the growing honors that shall gather around the son that we educate, we hope, in our old age, to rejoice. And so in more public undertakings. On the canal that we are excavating, we hope to see borne along the productions of the teeming soil; over the rail-way that we are laying down, though valleys are to be filled and mountains levelled, we expect to see the lengthened train of cars fly rapidly along; the ship whose keel we lay down, we expect soon to see riding majestically on the deep; the college whose corner-stone we lay, we expect soon will open its doors to receive the youth of the land; and in the solemn temple whose walls we rear, we trust that we and our children will soon worship God. We have faith, indeed, in the next generation, that it will finish what we have begun; and faith, in all future ages, that they will preserve what we secure by our valor or establish by our wisdom. But how few private enterprises would be commenced, if it were foreseen that they could not be completed before the life of the individual would be closed! And how few public undertakings would be embarked in, if their completion was understood to depend entirely on the

fidelity of far-distant generations! Who would lay the foundation of a college or a temple of worship, if this were the anticipation? Who would engage in a war, even for freedom, if it was foreseen that the fury of conflict was to rage from generation to generation; that the soldier and the officer were to die in the struggle, unblessed with the sight of victory, and that the laurel was to be won, if at all, by some victor of a far distant generation, to whom your name would be unknown?

The Missionary enterprise stretches farthest into futurity, implies the highest confidence in the fidelity of future ages, and anticipates the most steady and persevering self-denial, *in* those ages, of any cause in which men are now embarked. In this respect, it involves two things: first, faith in God—a firm belief that he is the patron of the cause; that he will continue to keep it before the minds of his people; that he will give them the means to prosecute it; that he will convert our children and children's children, and incline them to devote themselves to the work of rearing the glorious temple whose foundations we lay. Second, faith in coming generations—that they will approve the wisdom of our plans; that they will be willing to deny themselves and take up the cross, to finish what we have begun; that they will bear the cause on their hearts before God; that they will consecrate their wealth to the work; that they will devote their sons and their daughters to teach in the schools that we establish; that they will give up their choicest youth to publish the Gospel in the places where we lay the foundations of churches; that they will finish translating the Bible, which we had begun to translate; and that when, in this warfare, every leader and subaltern has fallen, others will rush in to supply their places, till—

> The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other; and the mountain tops,
> From distant mountains, catch the flying joy;
> Till nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.

Such an enterprise cannot be commenced and carried forward to its completion except under the auspices of the religion of principle. If this does not exist in the church, after a few fitful and spasmodic efforts; after the sensibilities of the church have been plied, until, by repetition, they have become paralyzed, the cause will be abandoned, and the heathen nations will continue to slumber on in the wretchedness of unbroken night.

Secondly, the enterprise to which the church is called in the prosecution of the work of missions, is one which contemplates such difficulties, embarrassments, and discouragements, that everything else but *principle* would be appalled. The friends of religion are not insensible to the existence of those difficulties. They have endeavored, as far as possible, to gauge them before they embarked in the undertaking. They have tried to explore the extent of the unbroken wilderness that is to be made to bud and blossom as the rose; to take the height of the

mountains that are to be levelled, and the depth of the valleys that are to be filled up. They have made it their business, as far as they were able, to "count the cost," and to "number the hosts that come against them," before they have gone forth to the conquest. There has probably been no great enterprise in which man has ever embarked, where the true nature of the difficulties to be encountered has been better understood, or where there has been less effort to conceal or disguise them. Christians have been instructed by their Master not to anticipate an easy triumph, or a conflict with a feeble enemy. They understand that the warfare is against "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." They have seriously engaged in the great work of converting this whole world to God, and of establishing everywhere the reign of righteousness and peace. They know the obstacles before them. There are not far from six hundred millions of heathens, who are to be reclaimed and elevated; there are one hundred and twenty millions of followers of the prophet of Arabia, who are to be converted to the faith of Christ; there are one hundred millions of nominal Christians, who are to be brought to a purer faith and a holier practice; there are three millions of the descendants of Abraham, who are to be led to mourn over the act of their fathers in crucifying their own Messiah, and over their own unbelief. This great multitude is to be subdued and changed without arms, or the aid of civil power, or the might of navies. It is to be done by the simple gospel. They who embark in this undertaking are not ignorant of the moral condition of that world of mind which is to be reclaimed and elevated. They do not expect to find it prepared to welcome the gospel; disgusted with prevailing superstitions; rising to intelligence and purity by a recuperative power of its own, or ready to cast its idols to the "moles and to the bats." They do not suppose that the nations will be awakened from their long, leaden slumbers by the first ray of light that breaks on their horizon, or that the budding charities of the soul, which have died under the long winter of superstition and sin, will of themselves swell into life. They do not expect to find minds prepared by science to welcome a pure faith, or to appreciate at once the argument for Christianity. They do not expect to find the heathen making progress in the arts, and carrying forward the conveniences and elegances of life, till they approximate what Christianity would do, and prepare them to welcome that system as the completion and perfection of their own. They expect to find the soul as dark and debased as it can be, and the space which divides the human race from the brute, reduced to the narrowest possible dimensions consistently with preserving that distinction at all. The heathen are of themselves making no advances towards the truth, or towards a better system of religion. They make no progress towards civilisation, intelligence, liberty. There is no elastic energy in a heathen mind, no recuperative power to bring it back to God, no well-spring of life to purify the soul. The effect of time is only to deepen the darkness, and to drive the heathen

farther from God. They only adore more shapeless blocks, they bow before worse-looking idols, they worship in less elegant, and more polluted temples. The idols of the heathen are not constructed with half the skill and taste with which they were two thousand years ago, nor are their temples built with such exquisite art. No idol of the heathen world could now be compared with the statue of Minerva at Athens; no temple can be likened to the Parthenon; no sentiment originated now in China, India, or Africa, equals in sublimity or purity the views of Socrates. The heathen world is becoming worse and worse—more degenerate, more abominable, more pitiable, from age to age. The friends of this great cause do not suppose that that degraded world of mind will arise by an elastic energy of its own, or that the river of pollution and death, by rolling longer, will work itself pure. They have entered on this work, too, feeling that evil in the heathen world is organized and compacted; that it is sustained by law, and incorporated with institutions having the sanction of ages, and with all their views of science; that it can bring to its aid the authority of a priesthood, supposed to be heaven-appointed; and that their poetry, their apothegms, their traditions all support the religion which we seek to displace. This great enterprise has been engaged in, also, in full view of the apathy, and coldness, and want of zeal of the great body of the Christian church; of all the prejudice which has been caused on heathen shores by those bearing the Christian name, who have gone for unholy gain, for plunder and rapine; of all the unrighteous wars which professedly Christian sovereigns have waged there; of all the injury done by slave-ships approaching a heathen coast under the abused flag of a Christian nation, to seize and fetter its unoffending inhabitants and to bear them away to hopeless bondage; and we expect to prosecute this great work in the very light and blaze of burning villages and hamlets, fired by those who bear the Christian name. This immense and far-spread prejudice we hope to overcome by the exhibition of that benevolence to which the gospel prompts, and by making the heathen understand, by a long course of efforts pursued for their good, that *all* who bear the Christian name do not visit their shores for plunder and rapine. And this work has been commenced, in full view of the belief that all this evil is systematized and arranged under the control of one master mind, the presiding spirit of evil, and that it is "methodised and wielded with a comprehension of plan which no man can explain upon the principle of accidental coincidence." Under this comprehensive plan, these various forms of evil are all marshalled and wielded, and every point may be defended by a leader who seems to have the power of ubiquity of action to strengthen whatever position is attacked. In such an enterprise, on what kind of religion shall we rely? Not the admiration of the beautiful is to accomplish the work, not that religion which would go to assimilate itself to these systems or to adopt their forms as its own, and not that "goodness" which, "like the morning cloud, soon vanishes away."

Thirdly, The missionary enterprise is one which is to be pursued

through scenes of alternate hope and fear; in times of elation and depression, when the sea is smooth and a steady breeze swells all the canvas, and when the storm arises and the billows roll. The appeal is not to be made to the church on the ground of success. The heart is not to be unduly elated when opposition yields, and the gospel achieves great triumphs; nor is it to be depressed when opposition becomes formidable, and no impression is made on the powers of darkness. The church is not to become self-confident or suddenly flushed with the hope of victory when her sons press forward to fill the ranks of those who have fallen in her service, nor is she to be disheartened when they prefer the gains of commerce, the honors of a learned profession, or the calm retreats of the Porch or the Academy, to the paths of self-denial which must be trod by the Christian missionary. It is the nature of this work to be calm, and confident in God, though the last herald of salvation on heathen ground, faint and feeble, should lift up the cry for help, and not a youth of the land should run to his aid. The church is not to be elated unduly, when religion seems to make its way triumphantly among mountain fastnesses, to find out an old and dilapidated church, and to kindle up again the flame of pure devotion in its ancient temples; nor is she to despond though armed hosts follow the adventurous tread of the Christian missionary, and murder the priests of religion, and lead Christian matrons and virgins into captivity, and extinguish there the holy flame which had begun to burn anew on those mouldering altars. From the very nature of Christianity, it will visit those mountain fastnesses again, undismayed, with the firm confidence that the holy light of religion will yet shine unextinguished there. Nor is the church to place her reliance on the wisdom of men, or to feel unduly elated when the leaders in this cause are blessed with uncommon prudence and sagacity, or be dismayed when such men are removed. The enterprise lives on while its earthly leaders die. It is not essentially disturbed, though such a man as Worcester, or Evarts, or Cornelius, or Wisner, be taken from its councils; for the Great Leader and Counsellor lives. Those *were* uncommon men. Few causes in which men have been embarked have had such men to lose; many a cause could not have parted with them and yet survived. Many an enterprise has been begun and ended under a single leader; and when the great mind that conceived it was withdrawn, no one was found to carry forward the plan which he had formed, and the fabric which he had reared fell by its own weight. The plans which had been commenced by Alexander could have been matured and perpetuated only by his own talents, and when he died, the immense empire which he had founded crumbled to fragments. The empire over which Napoleon ruled rose under his own mighty genius, and had he never been driven from his throne the world would not have had an intellect fitted to perfect his plans when he died. Cromwell left no successor to carry out the principles of that Protectorate which had made England more formidable and more respected than she had been under all her dynasties of kings from the time of Alfred;

and deprived of his mighty mind, the nation bowed to the sceptre of the most miserable specimen of royalty that ever occupied a throne. Not so when perpetuity and triumph depend on principle. Had Samuel Adams and John Hancock, when proscribed by the British Government, been arrested and put to death; had the voice of Patrick Henry been silenced by a poniard or a bribe; had the sagacity of Franklin and Sherman been withheld from the councils of the Revolution; nay, had the ball from the rifle of the Indian chief, aimed with a skill which had never before failed, pierced the heart of Washington, there would have been other Adamses, and Hancocks, and Henrys, and Shermans, and Franklins, and Washingtons, to conduct the nation to freedom; for there were great principles of liberty involved which could neither be proscribed, nor bribed, nor put to death. So in the cause of spreading the gospel around the world. No matter what earthly leader falls, the cause is to live. There are great principles involved in that cause, and it must live on from age to age; and when a leader falls, the church is not to be dismayed. She has embarked in this enterprise expecting that this is to be; and has learned to anticipate that a long succession of such men as Worcester, and Evarts, and Cornelius, and Wisner, *must* die before her object is accomplished.

Fourthly, the missionary enterprise contemplates such sacrifices as can be met only by steady principle. It supposes that there must be great self-denials, great expenditures, great sufferings. It was an elementary idea in the work of the Saviour when he undertook our redemption, that he was to be poor, despised, and forsaken; that he was to grapple, single-handed, with the most mighty enemy of God that the universe contains; that he was to endure the keenest tortures which the human frame could be made to bear. It was an elementary idea in the religion of Paul, that he was to abandon his splendid prospects of distinction; that he was to look away from the honors of scholarship, office, or eloquence, which had glittered in his youthful eye; that he was to be regarded as the "off-scouring of the world;" that he was to leave his country and his home; that his dwelling was to be among strangers, and that his life was to be spent "in perils of waters, and of robbers; in perils among his own countrymen and among the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings, and hunger, and thirst, and fastings, and cold and nakedness."

The great enterprise in which the Church is embarked now involves similar sacrifices and self-denials. It is supposed that there will be found in the Church, from age to age, sufficient Christian principle to meet the requisition for those sacrifices and sufferings. When the Declaration of Independence was adopted, there was such a depth of principle required among those who signed it, as to be ready to seal their attachment to it with their blood. John Hancock supposed that his conspicuous name might make him distinguished among those who

might perish on the scaffold, and in full view of such a possible result, he and they pledged to each other their "lives, their fortune, and their sacred honor." The sentiments of all those men are well known, and the language eloquently attributed to one of them (John Adams), will express the feelings of patriotism founded on principle, and may express *ours* in the cause in which we are engaged. "I see, I see clearly, through this day's business. You and I, indeed, may rue it. We may not live to the time when this Declaration shall be made good. We may die; die, colonists; die, slaves; die, it may be, ignominiously on the scaffold. Be it so—be it so. If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready at the appointed hour of sacrifice, come when that hour may. But, whatever may be our fate, be assured, be assured, that this Declaration will stand. It may cost treasure, and it may cost blood; but it will stand, and it will richly compensate us for both. Through the thick gloom of the present, I see the brightness of the future, as the sun in heaven. My judgment approves of this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope in this life, I am now ready here to stake on it; and live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration."

Such was *principle*, in a cause and on an occasion the most noble that the earth has witnessed, except that in which the Church is engaged of spreading the gospel around the globe. That is more noble; that involves still higher principle, and that may demand still higher and more continued sacrifices. The youth, who gives himself to Christ, should do it prepared to brave the cold of the north, or the burning heats of the line, in carrying there the pure gospel, and with the expectation that, after many an hour of unpitied suffering, he may lie unburied in a foreign land. The father is to be ready to part with his son—the pride of his heart, and the anticipated stay of his age—the son, whose early course has been radiant as the light of a morning without clouds, and who is qualified by native endowment to adorn the bar, the bench, or the senate chamber,—to preach the gospel to savages; and is to lay his hand on him and bless him, as the ship is loosening from her moorings, expecting to see his face no more. The mother is to press her much beloved daughter to her bosom for the last time, as she leaves her native land to meet the perils of the deep and the desert, and to die perhaps surrounded by strangers, and where *her* hand cannot soothe her dying sorrows. Youths, educated with all the care and skill that a Christian land can furnish; accustomed to the comforts and the elegances of life; with minds classical, tasteful and refined, like that of Henry Martyn, and with accomplishments that might adorn any circle, are yet to sing on many a deck, as the Missionary ship glides away:

Yes, my native land, I love thee;
All thy scenes, I love them well;
Friends, connexions, happy country!
Can I bid you all farewell?
Can I leave you,
Far in distant lands to dwell?

Home! thy joys are passing lovely;
Joys no stranger heart can tell!
Happy home! 'tis sure I love thee!
Can I—can I say—Farewell?
Can I leave thee,
Far in heathen lands to dwell?

Scenes of sacred peace and pleasure!
Holy days and sabbath bell!
Richest, brightest, sweetest treasure!
Can I say, a last farewell?
Can I leave you,
Far in heathen lands to dwell?

Yes, I hasten from you gladly,
From the scenes I love so well!
Far away, ye billows, bear me;
Lovely, native land, farewell!
Pleased I leave thee,
Far in heathen lands to dwell.

Bear me on, thou restless ocean;
Let the winds my canvas swell!
Heaves my heart with warm emotion,
While I go far hence to dwell.
Glad I bid thee,
Native land! Farewell—Farewell!

To engage in and prosecute a work thus stretching into future ages; a work which contemplates such difficulties, embarrassments, and discouragements; a work which is to be pursued through such scenes of alternate hope and fear, and a work contemplating such sacrifices, self-denials, expenditures and sufferings, there can be no reliance but the RELIGION OF PRINCIPLE.

It is this religion, originated only by the Holy Spirit of God, which, we trust, gave birth to the enterprises undertaken by this Board, and which has thus far animated and sustained the Board and its Missionaries, in the great work of giving the gospel to heathen lands. The circumstances under which we meet, Fathers and Brethren, are adapted forcibly to impress this truth on our hearts. Thirty-three years ago the Board held its second annual meeting in this place. It had then but nine members, and but little more than a thousand dollars in its Treasury, and had no missionaries in the field. It had four young men under its care, ready to go wherever the Providence of God should guide them, and whose wish to devote themselves to the work of missions, was as clearly formed under the influence of *principle*, as any purpose ever undertaken by man. With similar feelings they who then constituted the Board—but one of whom now survives—assembled here to look over the condition of the world. It was not a spirit of romance terminating in a missionary enterprise, which led to their organization; it was not a desire to extend and perpetuate a religion

of forms; it was not under the influence of mere temporary excitement. The Holy Spirit of God had created in their hearts a permanent conviction of the *duty* of obeying the last command of the Saviour, and of sending the gospel to distant nations.

One third of a century—the period of a generation of the human race—has passed away. The income of the Board has increased from one thousand, to more than two hundred and thirty thousand dollars. There was then no missionary station under their care, now there are ninety-five stations. Then, no American had left his native land, to be a missionary among the heathen. Now, one hundred and thirty-five ordained American missionaries proclaim the blessed gospel to the nations of the earth, and almost five hundred laborers are employed by this Board, in various departments of effort, in Pagan lands. Then, not one had been converted among the heathen by the instrumentality of this Board. Now, there are sixty-three churches, and more than twenty-five thousand members. Then, the Board convened in this place in a private parlor. Now, the largest edifice will not accommodate its members and friends.

During the time which has elapsed since that meeting, there have been reverses and discouragements—trials and deaths. But the religion under whose auspices the Board was formed, has proved itself equal to the exigencies which have arisen, and adapted to the work. The ends of the earth have felt the influence of this Board. The sun never sets on its missionary stations; and in all its history there has been no occasion to doubt, that the Religion of Principle is adapted to convey the gospel around the globe.

Fathers and Brethren! From the past let us take courage in regard to the future. Let us never be disheartened by reverses; let us not be unduly elated by success; let us never confide in impulses and temporary excitements; let us, above all, never trust in our own wisdom and strength. Leaning on the arm of our God and Saviour, and seeking to cultivate in our own hearts, more and more, the spirit of that pure gospel, which is itself nothing else than the religion of principle; let us go on, under all reverses and discouragements, laboring patiently till the Master shall call us home, and then leave the work to other hands, with faith in God, and faith in coming generations, that it will be accomplished. We shall die—some of us will soon die—all of us at no distant period. But this work will not die. It will be as deeply embalmed in the affections of those who succeed us, as it has been in ours; it will be as steadily prosecuted; it will make as triumphant a progress in future times as it has done in our own. Its final triumph is the only thing that illuminates the darkness of the future; but that result is as clear as the sun in heaven. By the grace of our God we will do our duty while we live; we will be found at our post when we die; we will pass the work, then, into other hands—and in our final abode in heaven we will calmly wait until from a redeemed world, a voice, loud as the sound of many waters, comes swelling up on high, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

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SERMON CCCLXXIV.

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THE LAW OF GRACE IN THE BESTOWMENT OF "THE INCREASE," CONSIDERED IN ITS APPLICATION TO CHRISTIANS.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." 1st Cor. iii. 6.

At the time the apostle addressed his first epistle to the Corinthians, they were divided in respect to their spiritual leaders; one saying, "I am of Paul"—another, "I am of Apollos"—and another—"I am of Cephas." With a view to correct this evil, he seeks to instruct them in regard to the functions and appropriate position of the Christian ministry. He recalls to their notice the fact, that he himself had planted this very church, that he first preached the Gospel to them, and sowed the seed of Divine truth. Providence directing him to another field, Apollos came; and entering upon the labors of his predecessor, he watered this spiritual soil. God, however, gave the increase; their ministry was successful because it was favored by God. Hence neither himself, nor Apollos, nor any other preacher should be made the centre of schism or faction: they were "laborers together with God," united in design, and all equally dependent on God for success.

By a careful inspection of the text, in itself and in its relations, it will be perceived, that all which the writer means by *planting* or *watering*, as attributed to himself, or Apollos, is associated with the idea of God, as giving the increase. The blessing comes in the presence, and not in the absence of the appropriate means. There is the planting—also the watering—also the increase given by God. This is the order of the apostle's thoughts. Between the use of means and the gift of grace, they suggest some connection. *What is this connection?* Are all methods of preaching the Gospel and applying moral causes in the kingdom of Christ equally adapted to success? Will men be as likely to be converted by flights of fancy and romantic exhilarations of taste, as by solemn and pungent exhibitions of truth? Is there any rule in heaven on this subject? Is that rule so well marked that we can define it, and by its light, with some degree of probability, calculate results, even before we see them? Since we depend on God for success, have we any means of inferring beforehand how

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sibilities, and on the other to trust in the power, and seek the aid of the
great Supreme. It is in this way only, that we can make practical the
idea of *acting*, as if all depended on action, and *trusting*, as if all de-
pended on God. It being granted, that God ordinarily bestows the
increase in the ratio of the kind and the character of the means, it does
not follow, that they should become the exclusive theatre of our confi-
dence; but it does follow, that our responsibility in their employment
is one of intense and awful nature.

This law of grace in the bestowment of the increase, considered in its application to Christians, will be the theme of the present inquiry.

You will permit me to assume that it is God's design in regard to every Christian, *that he should do good.* He can do good, and he ought to do so. God requires it. Everything in the moral universe demands it. As to the *quantity* of good, which he is to do, we can adopt

ut one rule; it ought to be as great as his circumstances and capacities will admit. If it be less, he sins by the defect.

There is another thought which is nearly allied to this, viz.: all ther things being equal, the amount of a Christian's usefulness will be a the ratio of his intelligence, his piety and his action. God, who iveth the increase, usually giveth it in the observance of this ratio. It i his plan to honor the higher developments and aspects of Christian haracter more fully, than those stinted and dwarfish growths, which eem hardly ever to have seen the sun of righteousness, or to have been ratered with the dews of heaven.

From this latter view it follows, that in order to realize an *increasing nd progressive* development of Christian influence and power, as the gift f God, there must be a prior and corresponding increase of Christian lements within us. The latter are first, in the order both of nature and me. They grow and expand together, but it is always in the relation f a cause and its effect. It is of great importance that we recognize i our *practice* the truth of this principle. To philosophize upon the ibors of others, is a very easy task; to hear sermons, and then give ur judgment upon their merits, is that, to which any man is equal; to ok over the evils of our race and then sigh in sentimental inactivity er human sorrows, demands nothing more than a heart, having the roperty of feeling; it costs a man no more to *cry* than to have the quisite apparatus for the same; to receive from others that, which the product of laborious and prayerful application, requires nothing at a wakeful mind and consenting will. These and kindred exercises ave but little of the grandeur and power which distinguished the reat apostle, or immortalized the career of Luther. A religious char-cter, in which these things are the chief constituents, costs nothing; ou can hardly imagine anything cheaper; and I may add, that it is orth nothing. To take hold of this world, and acting in accordance ith the laws God has defined in the scheme of redemption, to bring en to Christ, and through him to the favors of a reconciled God, is a ery different thing. It is not a mere work of words—not a sudden xplosion of sensibility, that expires by its own combustion; it calls r the consecration of man's best powers, fitted and trained for service nder the tutelage of the Deity. It is the very kind of labor, which it most difficult to perform, and from which our partially sanctified earts will be most likely to recoil. It is the arena of spiritual heroism, here achievements are not talked about, but *made;* where plans are ot dreamt of, but *executed.* The qualities which are suited to this eatre are eminently *practical;* and, to repeat an idea already stated, ey consist in a well instructed intellect, a devotedly pious heart, and e habit of great Christian activity. Where these exist, there it is eaven's choice to bestow a blessing. There will be a coincidence etween these spiritual endowments and the degree of the divine favors. is in this way that the Deity places his gracious and providential gnet upon the higher and purer developments of Christian character.

These views beget the following question, viz:—*How shall we pro-*

cure in an enlarged degree those qualities, which God so much delights to honor? How shall we gain this high grade of personal and practical Christianity, stretching its dimensions through our whole character, the prerequisite of a social and communicated Christianity? How shall this be done? You will permit me to express my fear, that some men have never asked this question; that others have imagined they were not the *proper* persons, either to ask it, or to answer it; that still others have philosophised upon it, as it bears upon the practice of other men, and not their own. On this, as on many other subjects, we are in danger of being like the Scribes and Pharisees—sitting in Moses' seat, and uttering wise sayings for the practice of others, which we never think of appropriating to ourselves. Let us pray, that we may not do this upon the present occasion; let both speaker and hearer bring the question home to their own hearts:—How shall we under God develope ourselves, that God may develope us in the world in which we live?

Hoping that we may all be willing to entertain this question, I proceed to observe, that it has many *details*, but a very few *principles*. In the answer which I propose to give, I shall fix upon but one principle. It may be thus stated:—*We are to grow in all the qualities of an internal and personal Christianity by the repeated and habitual exercise of those qualities.* I shall seek to give you some illustrations of the truth of this position.

I. It is in correspondence with universal analogy.

Man has no mental capability, and hardly any that is physical, which may not be wonderfully improved and developed by the simple law of exercise. There is no other way, in which we can acquire the use of our powers. All our processes of education, whether they propose to direct or strengthen human faculties, are based upon this principle. It is a principle universal; affecting the infant in the cradle, the sturdy smith revolving the muscles of his arm to a giant's power; equally affecting man in all the higher ranges of his career. An oriental emperor prided himself very much upon his skill in the use of the bow and arrow. Upon a certain occasion he gave an exhibition of his skill. He then directed his attention to the queen, expecting to hear from her the language of commendation. She simply remarked to him, that "practice makes perfect." The emperor regarded the language as an insult, and banished its author into lonely solitude. By the announcement of this principle having lost the possession of royal honors, she resolved in her retirement to test the question of its truth. Her plan was, to take an animal when young, but which, being full grown, would weigh several hundred pounds, and carry it up and down a flight of stairs, six times upon every day. She entered upon her work. As her charge increased in bulk and weight she increased in strength, until finally she was able to carry it according to the proposed method, when it had amounted to the weight of several hundred pounds. The emperor, in one of his royal excursions, beheld the exiled queen in the act of exerting her

muscular power. He sought an interview. To the question, how had she gained this wonderful strength, she replied, "*Oh! sir, practice makes perfect.*" These words produced an instant recognition of her person, and restoration to honors, which she had lost by simply stating a philosophical truth. Will you please to recollect the idea, "practice makes perfect?" A man cannot drive a nail, or soar in poetic verse, without involving this principle. He that is not trained under its tuition, is like a plant that has never seen the sun—a mere mass of moral *mucilage;* there is nothing which he *can* do, and nothing which he is *fit* to do. The doctrine of cast or fashion, which allows human beings to grow up inactive, is at war with the ordination of God; it makes them anything but human beings in all the practical and effective senses of life.

II. But, lest I should expand this analogical argument too far, I proceed to remark, that the proposition of Christian development, as the result of exercise, is a truth of direct and positive experience. There is no trait, or grace of Christian character, to which the principle does not apply. That you may the more conveniently apprehend this application, allow me to descend to several particulars.

1. In the first place, I fix my eye upon a Christian, who makes it a matter of conscience to be a regular attendant upon the public worship of God, and, when in the house of God, to be an attentive and faithful hearer of the word. He is neither a spiritual vagrant nor a Sabbath stroller. He has a religious home, and when the day of God returns he is there. He feels it to be his duty and privilege, to attend as many services on the Sabbath as the people of God in their discretion shall think it best to have. Of his value to the pastor—of the excellence of his influence among the people, I do not propose to say a word. What is the effect upon *himself?* He gradually becomes attached to this order of things; this attachment increases; it finally transmutes itself into a fixed and powerful habit; and then it is as natural to him as the breath he draws. He no more thinks of remaining at home, or wandering to other places, when his own church is open, than he would think of sleeping when the calls of business summon him to action. His example is a good one; in the end he becomes a trained soldier in the service of Christ—a man, who is always on the field and ready to do his duty. These results have been the product of exercise in a specific direction. And if I were to say, that there are many professing religion, who need to look at this subject, and in the light of it, to make some alterations in their practice, I should say no more than I solemnly believe. The habits of some members of the church are exceedingly deplorable; they seldom visit the house of God more than once on the Sabbath, and very frequently, not at all. As they now live, they never can be much developed as Christians. These things ought not so to be in any circle of Christ's followers upon earth. I would not unwarrantably lay my finger upon their conscience, or sit in judgment upon their private rights, or determine the quantity of their domestic claims; yet I cannot forbear to intimate a

solemn caution on this point. Will you think of it, judge of its application to yourself, and make such use thereof, as will be best here and hereafter?

2. For a second illustration I would have you fix your thoughts upon the exercise of *prayer*. That prayer is one of the urgent duties and rich privileges of every man, who would walk with God and go to Heaven, is a proposition which needs no proof. Who then are the men that most devoutly love the exercise of prayer, and most fully possess the power and spirit of prayer? Your minds have reached the answer more rapidly than my words; *they are the men who pray the most.* In their experience there is a glorious combination of action and reaction. By praying they learn to love the duty; and loving it, they are led frequently to repeat it. They grow strong in this exercise; accustomed to it, they learn how to approach the Eternal Throne, with an ardor, simplicity and confidence peculiarly their own; they plead the promises as though they believed them, and procure Heaven's benedictions upon themselves and their fellow men. They are free from that vapid and arid stupor, so characteristic of the man who seldom prays. Prayers, that have floated over congealed sensibility, or have been bleached of all their power in passing the intellectual region, are not the prayers they make. When they pray, the auditor feels that there is a moral contact of the finite and the Infinite. They can maintain the spirit, and also the proprieties of prayer, without the aid of liturgical suggestions. How is it with you, my brethren, on this subject? Is it well with you? Have you a place and season for secret prayer? Those of you, who are heads of families, do you pray in those families? Are you willing to unite with other Christians in social prayer; not simply hearing and silently praying, but yourselves openly and vocally leading at proper times? Say not, that you have no talent to perform the duty of prayer. This sentiment would pain you and mortify your pride, should it come from the lips of others. If it were true, it would prove a truth more serious and awful than itself; it would prove, that you have not sufficient talent to become Christians. It is not true; all that you need is the powerfully developing influence of exercise and action. This is able to make you princes, prevalent in prayer—a blessing to yourselves and the world.

3. For a third illustration I advert to the duty of *frequent and faithful conferences* with men on the subject of religion.—That it is the duty of *somebody* to converse about religion, to convey to, and impress upon others, its solemn realities, I conclude will be granted by all. It would seem equally obvious, that those who make a profession of religion, are the most proper persons to perform this duty; it may be fairly expected, that they should exert their powers of speech in vindicating the religion of Christ, and winning a dying world to its acceptance. Where was that philosophy begotten, which teaches a Christian to be religiously *dumb*, with such a theme, and in such a world? Most certainly not in the Bible; it never came down from heaven.

Nearly all the influence that is exerted on earth, is exerted by *talking;* and a nobler theatre for the use of this power, than religion, never existed. There must be something radically wrong in the soul of him who can never speak for Christ. How shall the world know that he is the Saviour's friend? The *reflected* effect of the duty upon him who performs it, is as great as the duty itself is important. I speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, in declaring, that the power to perform, grows, strengthens, and wonderfully matures, under this kind of training. Now suppose all this power, which is lodged in the church of God, were called forth and fully developed, what amazing effects would be experienced in this world! Behold all the Christians of the globe, touching society at ten thousand angles, and at each point infusing the word of life into the soul of every dying sinner; think you not, that the spirit of God would wing its way from the celestial world and harmonize in the intensity of its action with this intensity of Christian effort? Because this supposition is not real, what a vast amount of power lies buried in the church! It is buried, while eternity reflects to the regions of time the death-knell of ruined millions. The professed servants of God, in great numbers, *practically* plead their incapacity to warn and beseech the wicked; the world of wo uses no such argument against their reception, and the worm that never dies, loses not its power in the progress of their everlasting misery. Would that this thought might be so impressed upon us, that we should forget that *timidity*, which we ought never to have had, and that *inaptitude* to tell of the things of Jesus, which is our shame and reproach. Let these hints, for they are but hints, find a lodgment in every conscience; let every hearer adjust the question of duty which they involve, so that he can meet his own decision in the day of judgment.

4. For a fourth particular you will permit me to call your attention to the *diligent and proper study* of the Christian Scriptures. To be known, the Scriptures are to be studied; they are to be diligently searched by men. This is the appointed condition of their proper knowledge. The mere reading of the Bible in a loose and hasty manner brings very little benefit to any man; he forgets, as fast as he reads, and he does not understand, as he reads. To take up this book, deeply impressed with its high authority; viewing it as the record of divine thoughts, to bestow upon it a concentrated and powerful attention;—to be determined to master its doctrines, and visit home to the deepest abodes of our own consciousness its heavenly principles; this, hearer, is a very different exercise of the mind, and it will be as different in its results. It is the higher and better action of the soul upon things divine and invisible. Let us suppose a man to enter upon this work in solemn earnest; suppose him to pursue it with a diligence and effort that never tire, what will be the effect of this continued mental action upon Bible truth? He will be certain to experience a peculiar process of development in the direction of the Bible. The experiment was never tried without this result. His knowledge will be enlarged; that knowledge will become accurate and harmonious; the vigor of his own mind will be increased; the misty shades, which mental dull-

ness throws over the truth, will be dissipated, and he will see things clearly. His interest in the exercise will be in proportion to its continuance and intensity; and if he continue the process sufficiently long he will perfectly ravish his own soul with the study of the Bible. His fondness may become so exquisite and delicate, that he, at all times, seems to be in communion with the spiritual world; his religious sensibilities blaze out upon you, as if they had been lighted in heaven. How such a man is fitted for the work, either of planting or watering in the spiritual vineyard of Christ! How rare are his attainments, and how much guilt rests upon the church of God, that they are so rare! To be consistent we ought to do one of three things, viz.: to condemn this train of thought, or reduce it to practice, or condemn ourselves for the neglect. It is not too much to say, that in this age of bannered and bustling benevolence, of strange, mixed, and conflicting moral tendencies, there is great need of keeping close to the Bible. We do not want less action, but more meditation, more of soul-stirring contact with truth divine, to keep piety alive upon the altars of the heart. In the absence of this ingredient, the piety of the church will become noisy, clamorous, and powerless in one direction; formal, mechanical, and purely artificial in another; it will have all the symbols and insignia of power, without the elements of victory and strength. The history of all ages proves, that whatever comes between our intelligence and the Bible, so as to separate the two, results in our weakness; and if long continued, it will issue in total ruin. It may assume a most captivating title; it may burrow through antiquity, searching for jewels in the *patristic* age; it may adorn religion with *scenic* parade; or invest it with the lofty and scornful mien of philosophy, human and born below the Throne; if it intercept communion between the soul and the word of God, it will have the essential, the damning, the destructive properties of a Roman Pope. This is no flourish of words. Truth lies here—such truth as it has cost the world groans and ages of darkness to learn.

5. Finally, I would submit for your consideration *the habit of uniform Christian activity*. Some Christians are distinguished from others by the title of *active Christians*. What is Christian activity? It may be defined either by its *end* or its *means*. For its *end* it has the deliberate design of making men Christians, and thus glorifying God; its chief, its *only* purpose is to proselyte the world to Christ. In reference to the question of *means*, it employs all the methods of Heaven's appointment for the production of this end. It does not propose any emendations upon the plan of God; but such as it is, to use it with all its might. It is a spirit which acts everywhere and anywhere, where good can be done, and souls can be saved. It never says to others,—"Go forward, we wish you great success—we very much approve your course." Its language is, "Come, let *us* rise up and build." It never spends its strength as a mere spectator, and above all, as a mere ascetic and antinomian critic upon labors, which he is too *lazy* to undertake; it has time neither for the one nor the other; it has infinitely better business to do. What are the operations of this spirit upon him,

whose it is, written by the finger of time upon the tablet of ages? The mind is increasingly qualified for service by the simple act of service. By the experience of toil it learns to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. It is not easily fatigued, trifles do not discourage it; like some birds of passage it can remain long on the wing. When responsibilities are to be met, and great labors are to be performed, you will find this mind ready and willing to share its full weight of moral burdens. It is not the mind to be in an eternal flutter, yet doing nothing; feverish, yet exhausting itself in a mere effort to expurgate its own excitement. It has acquired a steadiness of purpose, a soberness and earnestness, which are the fruits of beginning to do, and then long-continuance in doing. Such a Christian, I assure you, is no figure of speech; there are in him all the dignity and reality of a man qualified to do something. The church needs such men; first, to keep it steady; secondly, to block it up when it makes advancement; thirdly, by continued pressure to augment its aggressive action upon the powers of darkness.

This discussion opens a very broad theatre for inferential remarks. Pleasing and profitable as the exercise might be, my time forbids me to indulge in it. With a brief retrospective glance I shall relieve your patience. What are you, my Christian hearers? *Planters and waterers* in the vineyard of God, which is the world. What is the ground of your encouragement? The assurance that God will bestow "the increase" upon your efforts. What is the ordinary relation of the divine benediction to the kind and character of those efforts? One that honors God, and speaks the words of deep and awful responsibility to the conscience of every Christian. What is the mode by which we, acting harmoniously with the laws and kingdom of grace, shall do the most good and the least evil? How simple the answer! We must be Christians ourselves; and in the only wayi n which it can be done, the elements, which make us Christians, must be largely expanded. We shall never rise above our own level; and if this be at a low point, though we had an angel's gifts, the world will be none the better. Cancel not your responsibility by some metaphysical subtlety about the sovereignty of God; plead not the inefficiency of means as an apology for selfishness and idleness; the kingdom of grace so harmonizes with that of means, as to preserve the integrity of the whole, and leave unimpaired the distinct sphere of each. Look around you—look at the thousands who are impenitent in these great cities; behold the work sin is achieving; follow out its results through unmeasured ages; then tell me, ye that are born of God, and who hope to shine in heaven, shall nothing be done? How well are you prepared to enter upon the work of rescue, and in all its details scatter the radiance of the skies through the walks of men? Events move too rapidly, and great issues are too speedily made up for cold speculation. There is the *practical*, as well as the *theoretical*, in moral being. I have sought in this discourse to give you the former, and I now commend it to you, and the God of grace, for his blessing.

SERMON CCCLXXV.

BY REV. NATHANIEL BOUTON,

CONCORD, N. H.

Preached before the Alumni of the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass., September 3d, 1844.

EXPERIENCE IN THE MINISTRY.

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." 1 Tim. iv. 15.

The qualifications and labors which are essential to success in the ministry, may be exhibited in at least two different ways: either, first, in the form of authoritative precepts, enjoining, as in the text, the observance of them, on ministers of the word; or, secondly, in the form of example, giving the results of experience and observation; thus showing how eminent usefulness in the ministry has been attained.

Each of these modes has its advantages. The former is the more common; but as we are now assembled, as Alumni of this Sacred Institution, where we studied the rules and the theory of our profession, and sought those moral and intellectual qualifications which were deemed essential to success; it cannot be unsuited to the occasion to rehearse the lessons of experience. In the fields of labor which Providence hath assigned us, and which we have cultivated, some, five; some, ten; some twenty years and more; we have reduced the theory of our profession to experiment; we have tested the wisdom of instructions and counsels given by our venerated teachers; and we have proved the moral efficacy of those doctrines of religion which we had studied and embraced as the truths of God.

I propose, therefore, to speak at this time of EXPERIENCE IN THE MINISTRY. By experience, however, I mean not chiefly the views and feelings, with which we have personally prosecuted our work; not merely our trials and discouragements, or our comfort and success: but rather, I mean to include, in experience, *what has been found generally in the ministry to be most conducive to usefulness.* I would further remark, that in my illustrations of the subject, I shall have special regard to the experience of ministers, as pastors of churches.

I. In the first place, experience teaches *the necessity of a high standard of piety in ministers.*

It is admitted as a first principle that piety is the primary qualification for the ministry. No man may even presume to enter upon the sacred office without being "called of God and moved thereto by the Holy Ghost." He must, in the scriptural sense, be a converted and sanctified man. For how can *he* preach the gospel to others, who has no experience of its renovating power on his own soul? How inculcate repentance, if a stranger to godly sorrow himself? How recommend a Saviour, whose love he has never felt? How describe the exercises of faith, of love, of hope, of humility, and other Christian graces, if the lineaments of them are not drawn on his own heart? How can he warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, if he himself be in the broad road that leads to it? And how guide saints to heaven, if his own feet tread not the celestial way?

But every year's experience in the ministry has not only confirmed but greatly deepened our impressions on this subject. The nature of our work is such, that we cannot proceed a step in it, with comfort, without a pure conscience, and a sense of God's approving presence. Every private, social and public duty, demands gracious affections; and as most of our duties imply higher responsibilities than rest upon Christians in ordinary life, so we feel the need of a larger measure of grace and of the spirit of devotion. Without this, we can attain to no such views of the perfections and glory of God; or of the excellence and love of Christ; or of the odiousness of sin and the beauty of holiness, as are adapted to produce strong and lively impressions on the minds of our hearers. We can neither preach nor pray, converse nor administer ordinances, with comfort to ourselves and edification to others, while conscious that our own hearts are not imbued with the spirit of the gospel. "I must confess," says Mr. Baxter, "I speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused also; and I have often observed it in the best of my hearers, that when I have grown cold in preaching, they have grown cold accordingly. The next prayers I have heard from them have been too much like my sermons." What minister's experience is different from this?

On the other hand, what minister cannot testify, that in proportion as he has lived near to God in daily communion; as he has walked with Christ and drank of his spirit; as he has felt in his heart the glowing graces of love and faith, of hope and joy; as he has been impressed with the worth of souls, the guilt of sin, the terrors of God's wrath and of the bliss and glory of heaven; in that proportion have his preaching, prayers, and other labors, had a spiritual savor imparted to them, and produced a visible and salutary effect on the religious state of his people?

II. Experience proves that to ensure permanent good results, *ministers must be wholly devoted to their appropriate work.*

That special preparation is needed to enter upon the work of the

ministry is generally conceded. Hence, we argue the necessity of a long course of mental training and discipline in collegiate and theological studies: in the former, to lay broad foundations for intellectual growth and vigor; in the latter, to gather and arrange the materials for professional use. But is there less need for application to our appropriate studies, year after year, so long as our Master sees fit to employ us? Can we even retain what we already know, without increase? And will not our ministry grow feeble, our preaching be uninstructive, and all our powers be paralyzed, unless our time and all our mental energies be steadily applied to our appropriate work?

Experience gives one uniform answer to these inquiries. The work of the ministry is so great, that no man can "make full proof of it," without "giving himself wholly to the discharge of its duties." The preparation of sermons alone, which are profitable to preach, demands our best powers. We are expected and required to bring forth from the treasure of the divine word, "things new and old." Having due regard to the various circumstances of our hearers, as to age, intellectual culture, moral and religious character, we are rightly to divide the word of truth, and to declare the whole counsel of God. We must unfold, explain and defend, according to our best ability, the grand system of divine truth as the spirit has revealed it; gathering our materials for argument and illustration from the inexhaustible mines of scripture, and from the boundless resources of nature. But no one topic of discourse, either of doctrine or duty, can be fully explained and applied in all its relations, in a single sermon. It is a sublime peculiarity of the truths of the Bible, that the more they are studied, the more fathomless their depths, the wider their relations, the more grand and glorious their applications and results appear to be. Time was, in our ignorance and inexperience, when we verily feared, that after preaching a few score of sermons, we should exhaust the whole system of Theology. But so different is experience from this, that the more we study and the further we advance, the more the system expands, opening to our view new and brighter glories; as when the eye surveys the evening firmament, after exhausting its own ken, then with telescopic aid it ranges through the illimitable expanse, and beholds new worlds and new systems spreading higher and further, filling the universe with demonstrations of the power and glory of their Maker.

Our experience therefore is, that if in preparing sermons, we brought to our aid only the meagre stock of knowledge which we acquired in our preparatory studies, our resources would soon be exhausted. At least, our ideas would soon flow in a sluggish stream or even become a stagnant pool. Hence, it is necessary to add to our stock every day. The mind must not only be burnished by exercise, but enriched with new acquisitions.

Add to the labor of preparing sermons for the Sabbath, the duties expected and required of every faithful pastor—the preaching of lectures and occasional discourses, once, twice or thrice a week—visit-

ing the families of his charge—attending often in the chambers of sickness, of sorrow and of death—superintending the education of the young—watching over his flock, and with a kind of ubiquity, being present in every part of his parish, to guard against errors, to heal divisions, to strengthen the weak and comfort the feeble-minded; fulfilling moreover his duties to neighboring churches, to his brethren in the ministry and to the kingdom of Christ at large; and last, providing for his own household, and taking care of his own health and his own soul; then judge ye, of the necessity of a minister's giving himself wholly to his work! On this point, I may safely make the appeal to you, my brethren. Who of you has not found it indispensable, in order to "fulfil your ministry," to husband your time with the utmost care; to have fixed hours for study; and to guard against interruptions and encroachments from abroad? Who has found leisure for foreign pursuits? I will not ask, who has indulged in indolence; wasted time in needless recreations, in social dissipation or in worldly engagements; without at the same time experiencing, as a just retribution, barrenness of thought, dullness of religious affections, drowsiness in preaching, dearth in his church, and stupidity over and throughout his congregation?

We appeal not to the living only, but to those eminent servants of Christ who have finished their work, and gone to their reward. Paul acted on the inspired injunctions which he laid upon others; "was instant in season and out of season, making full proof of his ministry." Baxter, whose labors and success in the ministry, considering his many infirmities, seem almost super-human, says, "all the pains that ever my infirmities brought upon me, were never half so grievous, as the unavoidable loss of time which they occasioned." Over the study door of Cotton Mather—that pattern for ministers, of good devised, of good accomplished—was written as a hint for visitors, "Be short." Doddridge, one of the best pastors that ever lived, was remarkably solicitous to redeem his time. He usually rose at five, through the whole year; and to this he ascribed a great part of his progress in learning and success in his ministry. He often expressed his grief and humiliation before God, "that there had been many void spaces which had not been filled with any employment that might turn to good account." President Edwards resolved "never to lose one moment of time, but improve it in the most profitable way he possibly could." Dr. Emmons, in his autobiography, says, "as soon as I entered the ministry, I resolved to devote my whole time to the sacred work, without encumbering myself with the cares and concerns of the world." And for fifty-four years he maintained that resolution. I need not multiply examples. Experience is uniform in her testimony, that the ministry demands our undivided time, and the exertion of all our powers. Without these, a failure in the most important ends of the ministry is inevitable.

It is just, however, before closing this topic, to offer two observations, viz.: 1. That in some cases ministers are so situated, that ne-

cessity is laid upon them, to support themselves in part, by secular labor. So Paul says, in particular instances, "these hands have ministered to my necessities," "we labor working with our own hands." Where this necessity exists, and secular labor is wholly subordinate to the work of the ministry, and engaged in without private and selfish ends, God's blessing may still be expected, and much good accomplished. So, many of our fathers in the ministry, in the early settlements of New England, wrought and preached. 2. My second observation is, that in cases where ministers of extraordinary endowments are settled in parishes so small, as not really to demand all their time and powers, they are allowed—rather I might say, required—to employ their talents for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in a wider sphere. They may assist their brethren in other places; they may preach through the press as well as in the pulpit. And it is worthy of note, as demanding our gratitude, that our best printed sermons and ablest theological works, are the productions of settled pastors. Their first impression was on the hearts of their people, by the living voice from the pulpit; the more permanent impression, that will live through succeeding generations, is the printed page.

III. The third point of experience in the ministry *respects the kind of preaching which has proved to be most useful.*

It is apparent that among useful ministers there are diversities of gifts; and differences in the mode of administration. How unlike were Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, and the beloved disciple John: yet, who would presume to measure their comparative usefulness! Scarcely were ever two men more dissimilar in their manner of preaching than Richard Baxter and President Edwards; or than Payson and Emmons. Yet, these dissimilar men were blessed of God as instruments of great and permanent good, perhaps, on a large estimate, in nearly an equal degree. In judging, therefore, of the kind of preaching on which the Spirit of God sets the broadest seal of approbation, we must not judge according to outward appearances, or from immediate, visible effects. It is not always the eloquent voice and oratorical manner; not the polished and beautiful style; not the logical argumentation; not the gush of emotion in the preacher, nor the tearful sensibilities of the hearers;—it is not one nor all of these, which is the surest indication of success. But that preaching is most useful, which produces the strongest and most abiding impression of moral obligation; brings the minds and hearts of hearers into closest union with God and Christ, with judgment and eternity; which awakens in the unconverted solicitude for salvation, guides the trembling penitent to the Lamb of God, inspires Christians with strong desires after holiness, and confirms them in the faith and love of the Gospel. Such effect is the highest aim of preaching.

1. In regard, then, to the teachings of experience, our first remark is, that in the preaching of a minister through successive years to the same people, there *will* be, I do not say *must* be, much that will seem

at the time to be of little profit. Owing to the state of mind of the preacher; the circumstances of the congregation; the nature of the subject, or some hidden and inexplicable cause, not a few sermons will seem to be "as water spilled upon the ground which cannot be gathered up."

2. Again, there is a large class of subjects in preaching, which, though highly important in their place and indispensable in the ministrations of a pastor, are incapable, ordinarily, of producing very marked impressions. They are such as relate to the common duties of Christians, self-examination, watchfulness, secret and social prayer, religious conversation and holy example; or to the various states and stages of the Christian life; or to particular points of doctrine, explanations of difficult texts or delineations of scripture characters. These, I say, must occupy a large space in the preaching of a pastor, and serve most valuable purposes in the edification of the saints.

3. But my third remark is, that a higher interest is attached to sermons appropriate to *occasions*, which, as they occur in the course of divine providence, the eye of a faithful pastor is quick to discern, and his heart prompt to improve. Such occasions are not rare: sickness, death, casualties, sudden and unexpected reverses of fortune; the seasons in their course; the beginning and close of the year; the anniversary of a pastor's settlement; days of public thanksgiving or of fasting and prayer; together with occurrences within the church, parish, state and country, which awaken general interest. These, when wisely and appropriately alluded to, or made the theme of discourse, give a zest to sermons, and in many cases produce most happy impressions. Indeed, those pastors who have best succeeded in sustaining, through a long ministry, an interest in their preaching, have been distinguished for this trait in their ministry. Some of their best and happiest efforts have been on such occasions. At such times, they have risen quite above their ordinary standard, and, by remarks and reflections coincident with the teachings of Providence, have produced impressions never to be effaced from the breasts of their hearers.

4. That preaching, however, is found by experience to produce a still deeper impression, in which there is a clear, scriptural proof, illustration and application of some fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. Such, I mean, as the doctrine of God—his power, holiness, justice, goodness, grace and sovereignty; the doctrine of Christ—his divinity, atonement and intercession, his authority as Head over all things to his Church, and as the final Judge of men. I mean the doctrine concerning man—his entire and inexcusable depravity; his moral obligation and ability to repent, notwithstanding his aversion to do it; and his consequent dependence on the efficacious aids of divine grace. I mean, also, the doctrine of regeneration by the agency of the Holy Spirit; of justification, by faith alone in the merits of a crucified Redeemer; the perseverance of believers in faith and holiness; the adorable justice of God in the condemnation of sinners; and, finally, the doctrine of a judgment to come, and eternal retribution, according to the deeds done in the body.

These doctrines, when lucidly presented with the arguments derived from reason and revelation that sustain them, and with the solemn applications which they admit and require, take the strongest hold of the human heart. They bring the sinner into fearful proximity with the infinite and holy God, hold his conscience with a giant grasp, prostrate his pride of intellect and greater pride of heart, and allow him no alternative but submission or ruin. Above and beyond all others, they make solid, stable Christians, of large and manly growth. Inwrought with their faith and experience, they are like so many anchors to hold them from being blown away by the whirlwinds of delusion and fanaticism, which uproot and scatter the foundations on which multitudes rest.

Of these cardinal truths which are the great themes of a minister's commission, I must not forbear to name one, as the glory and crown of all; I mean the doctrine of the cross. "We preach Christ crucified." "I determined," says the apostle, "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." The superlative power of this doctrine seems to be found in the fact, that in its elements and relations it comprehends all others. It includes God—the Majesty of Heaven—offended; the law, whose curse the sinner has incurred; it comprises also the whole *matériel*, so to speak, of sovereign grace, because Christ is God's gracious gift, and salvation is solely of grace through faith in him. Above all, it is the doctrine of love and mercy spanning the clouds of divine wrath, like the bow of promise, and assuring every penitent and believing sinner, that unworthy, guilty, deserving of punishment as he is, he may yet be forgiven and exalted to glory immortal in heaven.

I am sure I shall make no vain appeal to experience, when I ask you, my brethren, if in your preaching you have not found your strength, comfort and success chiefly here? Were you, however, at a loss for an answer, I would appeal to apostles and martyred confessors; to the ministers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; to the Moravian brethren among the snows of Greenland and under the burning equator; I would appeal to those honored servants of God, who reared the superstructure of our nation's institutions on the foundation of the doctrine of the cross. I would appeal to the Shepards and Cotton Mathers of an early age; to the Edwardses and Bellamy; to Davies and the Tennents; to Smalley and Dwight; to Griffin and Emmons and Harris; to Payson and Porter.

I offer one additional remark on this subject, as a matter of experience, viz.: That the effect of preaching on the same important themes is not always equal. Ministers think, write and speak, with far greater freedom at one time than at another. The fact may, perhaps, be sufficiently explained on philosophical principles: but the true explanation we believe to be, that God by his Spirit affords greater aids at one time than at another. These are what Robert Hall calls, "gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and power"—when there is a clear insight and penetration into the deep things of God; when the moral vision is quickened and expanded; the heart is big with emo-

tion, and a VIEW is gained of spiritual and eternal things, which far transcends all ordinary conceptions. Such seasons of light and power are usually in answer to prayer, and after the soul has been deeply humbled under a sense of sin and of insufficiency for the work of the ministry. Then the awe of God's majesty is in the soul; the love of Christ pervades and fills it to its largest capacity; the weight and worth of eternal things are felt; the danger of sinners seen; and then the heart of the preacher, burdened with the Lord's message, utters its mighty emotions in tones of authority and tenderness and love. This is eloquence, pure, spiritual, divine. Davies expresses the full sentiment when he says, "Perhaps once in three or four months I preach in some measure as I could wish; that is, I preach in the sight of God, and as if I were to step from the pulpit to the supreme tribunal. I feel my subject; I melt into tears, or I shudder with horror when I denounce the terrors of the Lord. I glow, I soar in sacred ecstacies, when the love of Jesus is my theme; and as Mr. Baxter was wont to express it, in lines more striking to me than all the fine poetry in the world,

> 'I preach as if I ne'er should preach again,
> And as a dying man to dying men.'"

IV. In the fourth place, I would briefly speak of experience *as it regards the personal habits and labors of a minister, which ensure usefulness.*

On this large topic I must be content with a bare outline. But I observe, as the heart of a devoted minister is full of solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his people; so he devises liberally, and lays out plans for their benefit, according to his ability to execute.

> "And as a bird each fond endearment tries
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
> He tries each art, reproves each dull delay,
> Allures to brighter worlds and leads the way."

Examples of this assiduous care will readily occur to your minds. Among the variety of means which distinguished pastors have ever adopted, and which God has owned, I name the exercise of faithful discipline in a church; the careful training and instruction of the young in the doctrines and duties of religion; frequent meetings for prayer and conference; seasons of fasting; visiting of families and conversation with every class of persons on their religious state, together with such other means, either common or special, as in their judgment are adapted to accomplish the ends of the ministry.

But in forming and executing plans for the good of a people, experience teaches, 1. That it is unwise and dangerous to make experiments of measures which have not already been well tested, and which have no decisive, scriptural warrant. 2. That nothing is ever gained by at-

tempting to carry measures by force of authority and office, rather than by argument and persuasion; for if the bare proposal of a measure by a pastor to his church and congregation, with a candid statement of his reasons for it, do not ensure its adoption, to persist by authority will produce a dangerous reaction. 3. That no good is ever secured by what is called *management*, for as surely as that trait is discerned in a minister, instead of the simplicity and godly sincerity which should distinguish him, he will be an object of suspicion and distrust, and will soon manage himself out of pulpit and place. 4. That a desire to please men in preaching or in measures, is the most likely way to displease men and God too; and if at any time a minister has the fear of man before his eyes, so that he *dare not* preach certain doctrines or duties plainly and boldly, he is then ensnared and shorn of his strength. 5. That in case conflicting interests and opinions divide the minds of his people, and it is necessary for him to take sides with one or the other, he must stand upon his reasons, modestly, frankly and decisively expressed. 6. And once more, to ensure the confidence and co-operation of his people, a minister must rely much more on his good sense and prudence, than on the sanctity of his office or even his good intentions. For, though a people will bear long with one who means well, though he be not a great man, yet they have not commonly grace enough to forgive *want of common sense.*

Hence, further, it is the voice of experience, that while a minister's reputation abroad depends chiefly on his preaching and public labors, the attachment, respect and confidence of his own people depend much more on his daily manifestations of private and personal worth. The secret of his power, after all, lies in his character; in the consistency of his example; in prudence of speech and conduct; in his kind and sympathizing spirit; his meekness and affability; in his deportment as a neighbor and as a citizen. His worth is better judged of in the dwellings of the poor than in the mansions of the rich; by the bed-side of the sick, afflicted and dying, rather than in the pulpit. With all the power of intellect that distinguished Dr. Emmons as a preacher, he never could have gained such control over his parish as he acquired, without the private and personal worth to which I have alluded. In reference to this point, I know of nothing in his history more beautiful and touching than the testimony of a gentleman whom the doctor visited in sickness. "To know him," he says, "as he really was, you must have met him by the bed of pain, prostration and anxiety. Here I first saw him; and such was his discourse; so pious, so parental, so consoling, that it never has been, and I think never will be, forgotten by me. For at this moment, he *lives* in my memory as he then sat by my bed-side, the very image, it seemed to me, of his great and gracious Master."

V. Time allows me to speak further only of experience *as to trials and encouragements in the ministry.*

Happily, through the kind providence of God, we are exempted, in

great measure, from such trials as apostles and ministers of Christ in former ages experienced. Still, there are trials peculiar to the ministry everywhere; "we labor and suffer reproach." We often tremble at our responsibilities and cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are tried and grieved when our well-meant endeavors for the good of others meet with ungrateful returns; when our motives are misrepresented, our measures censured and our plans thwarted. The instability of some; the backsliding apostasy and enmity of others, of whom we once entertained good hope, are a grief to us. Not unfrequently, those on whom we relied as pillars in the church, break down; and our most substantial supporters desert us. We are tried at the alienations and dissensions; the errors and delusions; the bigotry and fanaticism, which, every now and then, spring up within the bounds of our charge. Every contending party seeks to enlist our sympathy and support; and whether we yield or refuse, we are in most cases equally the subjects of censure and reproach. The discipline of unworthy members often concentrates against us powerful family and local prejudices; and for our plain and honest reproofs of vice, we are counted *imprudent* by the timid and time-serving, and *enemies* by those whose reformation we seek. But our greatest trial is, that notwithstanding all our endeavors, we often seem to labor in vain and to spend our strength for naught; notwithstanding our counsels and warnings, our entreaties and prayers, the souls for whom we watch remain unmoved and unconverted. Under such circumstances, we can truly say, "We have great sorrow and heaviness of heart."

Yet, on the other hand, we are by no means destitute of comfort and encouragement. We are "willing to labor and suffer reproach," so long as we can "approve ourselves as the ministers of God;" sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things; often wearied *in* our work, but never weary *of* it. While we relinquish the ease, the honors and the wealth, which men in other professions grasp after and often acquire, we can truly say, with the apostle, we are thankful to be counted worthy to be put into the ministry. To be useful to the souls of men, we count a higher distinction than to be clothed with the honors and offices which the world can confer. Where is the faithful minister whose experience does not accord with the following testimony of an aged servant of Christ?* "The ministers of Christ receive no inconsiderable reward as they go along, before their labors and their lives are ended. They enjoy the pleasure which there is in separating themselves from the world, and intermeddling with all wisdom. They enjoy the benefit which there is in the effectual and fervent prayers of those who esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake. They enjoy the satisfaction which there is in observing their people growing in knowledge and grace under their instruction. And some-

* Emmons.

times, they enjoy that more noble and divine happiness which results from the success of their labors in the conversion of sinners, of whom they had travailed in birth, until Christ was formed in them. These spiritual children are their reward while they live and converse with them in this life; they will be their reward, when they meet them in the day of judgment; they will be their reward when they meet them in glory in heaven; and thence onward for ever!" Such a prospect as this supported and animated Paul under all his labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ. "We were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what is our hope or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy!"

CONCLUSION.

1. *We learn some of the causes of the frequent dismissions of ministers from their charge.* These causes are exceedingly various. Some originate in a wrong public sentiment; in the unstable character of the times; in the excitements and innovations in society which would abolish existing institutions and make all things new. In many cases, no doubt, the people that decide it is expedient to dismiss their minister are chiefly to blame. But experience leads us to inquire, to what extent dismissions are owing to deficiencies or faults in ministers themselves! Is it not sometimes the case that men engage in this holy and arduous calling without due qualifications of heart? If not altogether without grace, yet without the deep, devoted, self-sacrificing piety, which constrains them to say, "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel!" Are not many deficient in mental culture and acquisition; without fixed habits of study, and with no disposition to form them; consequently failing to feed the people with understanding and with knowledge? Their ministry is unprofitable, and dismission ensues. Do not others relinquish their appropriate work? Either through want of love for their employment, or under the mistaken apprehension that they can better serve God and their generation by giving a portion of their time to other pursuits, they cease to magnify their office. One becomes enamored of literature, and cultivates his taste for it by pursuing studies quite out of the line of his profession. Another is ambitious to make a book, and if the minister becomes subordinate to the author, the former will be likely to fail in proportion as the latter succeeds. A third must needs dip into politics, and by the time he becomes acquainted with the science of government; with the discipline and tactics of party, and is perhaps himself a candidate for office; his zeal in the ministry is quite cooled, and his profiting appears to no one. Yet another assumes the business of a teacher, and his ministry is enfeebled, not for want of intellectual employment, but as a result of divided interest. Others, greedy of "filthy lucre," embark in some worldly enterprise or speculation; lose their spirituality of mind; become involved in debt, or, what is worse, inflated by wealth; and then,

from necessity or choice, close their pastoral relations. In regard to these and all such occupations, experience proves that just so far as they are engaged in, except from necessity and as wholly subservient to the work of the ministry, they do, insensibly perhaps, but really and effectually, undermine a minister's usefulness. Even music and the garden, when they divide the attention and affection of a minister, diminish his power. But experience does not stop here!

Some, verily believing that Providence made a mistake in their location, and equally confident that they are qualified for a better or a larger place, privately seek a change, until, to their sorrow, it comes upon them. Others take counsel of their love of ease, and, hoping to be more useful by studying less and visiting more, their ministry ends in failure. How many in these days of new and strange things, borne away by some breeze of popular excitement, or even, it may be, convinced of the utility of some of the thousand projects of reform, conceive it to be their duty to enlist as agents, at least as active promoters of them, and then give that prominence to their new views and schemes, which belongs only to the doctrines of the cross and to measures to save sinners! What observer of the times has not already traced many dismissions to this cause! There are other points connected with this topic, which I am almost afraid to touch. Alas! my brethren, experience is sometimes a painful teacher! How often has a minister's power in the pulpit been paralyzed by his example out of it; how often his influence diminished and his dismission brought about, by some infelicity of temper, imprudent speech, ill-judged controversy; by impatience under provocation; by meddling with what does not concern him; by some meanness in business transactions; by too tenacious an adherence to his own opinion on unessential points; too much solicitude about his support; or perhaps, by too strenuous a demand of his legal claims! Why should I pain you, by alluding to experiences of another sort, that issue, not barely in the dismission, but in the disgrace, the deposing and excommunication of ministers? It argues the healthful moral state of our churches; their doctrinal soundness and their elevated standard of piety; that the least departure from moral integrity, the abandonment of a single fundamental doctrine, and especially, one known act of vice or crime, is a forfeiture of a minister's character and place, never to be regained!

2. I remark, secondly, that *as to the total amount of a minister's usefulness, it is comparatively of little consequence where he is settled.* For inasmuch as his influence depends on his character for piety and talents, on his application and devotion to his appropriate work; where these are united in a minister, he will *create* an influence around him, which, according to the laws of God's moral kingdom, will go forth in continually widening circles, till it may reach the outer boundaries of the globe! We are aware, indeed, how common it is to estimate a man according to the place where he happens to be located: and in our wisdom—rather I should say, in folly and pride—we talk of one man being qualified for the city, and another for the country; one

for this station, and another for that; one for a foreign missionary, and another for a retired parish minister! And we often set about assigning men their several locations, according to these narrow views of fitness. On the same principle, candidates for the ministry not unfrequently picture out in imagination the place or kind of place, which they esteem themselves fitted to occupy! Now, I do not wholly deny that, in some respects, one minister may be better qualified for a particular situation than another. But I affirm that the qualities which, at all times and everywhere, constitute the essential ingredients of a successful ministry, will render a minister distinguished wherever he is located. Consequently, to judge men merely by *place* is an invidious, deceptive and unworthy criterion.

To be settled in a populous city, or thriving village, with a charge of one thousand or two thousand souls, may seem to be quite an object of ambition; and one so honored, may for a time be an object of envy to a brother in the ministry, who is settled, almost against his will, in a small obscure parish, with a feeble church, and an unlettered peasantry for his hearers; yet, supposing them to possess equal piety, talents, industry and love to their work, it is by no means certain that in the course of a ministry of twenty, thirty or forty years, the former will be the most successful, most honored and most rewarded by his Master. I need not point out all the causes which will affect their usefulness. But it is a notable fact, that of all the good ministers of Christ, whose praise is in the churches, and whom the Christian world holds most in reverence; the greater part lived, labored and died in small country parishes, whose very names, but for them, would never have been heard of. When Doddridge was first settled in the obscure parish of Kelworth, one of his fellow pupils in a letter condoled with him, "*on being buried alive there.*" To which Doddridge replied, "here I stick close to those delightful studies, which a favorable Providence has made the business of my life. One day passeth away after another; and I only know it passeth pleasantly with me. I can willingly give up the charms of London, the luxury, the company, the popularity of it, for the secret pleasures of rational employment and self-approbation, retired from applause and reproach, from envy and contempt; so that, instead of lamenting it as my misfortune, you should congratulate me upon it as my happiness, that I am confined in an obscure village, seeing it gives me so many valuable advantages to the most important purposes of devotion and of philosophy, and I hope I may add usefulness too." Dr. Scott preached most of his life, in small parishes, that could barely support him. Of the pastors whose names are the glory of New England—let me speak of Edwards, whose ministry gave fame to Northampton and to Stockbridge; of Bellamy, who spent a ministry of fifty years in so obscure a parish in Connecticut, that its name can hardly be found on a map of the State; of Smalley, settled in Berlin; of Bachus, in Somers; and of Emmons, in Franklin. Pardon me, if I name two venerable servants of Christ, whose influence I can more fully estimate from observation. The late

Dr. Church, of Pelham, was, for at least twenty years, revered as the father, I might also say, as the Patriarch of New Hampshire churches. His apostolic piety, his puritan simplicity, his godly sincerity, his practical wisdom and self-denying benevolence, made his very name synonymous with Christian truth and goodness. The late Dr. Harris, settled for forty years among the rocks and hills of Dunbarton, not only converted the wilderness into a fruitful field, but stamped the impress of his own sterling virtues so deeply on the minds and hearts of his parishioners, that twice that period will not avail to efface them. By his clear, bold, discriminating preaching of the doctrines of grace, he was a chief instrument of expelling from all the surrounding region, the leaven of Arminianism, and of promoting extensive revivals of religion. Barren as was his field of labor, and hemmed in by mountains, an influence, fragrant as from the garden of the Lord, went forth in all directions to the near and remote parts of the state, so that his lonely abode became an object of attraction, and of frequent resort, in honor of its venerated pastor.

3. My third and closing observation is, *that the subject enables us to appreciate the grief of a people, when they follow a venerated and beloved pastor to the grave.*

"A good name," says the wise man, "is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." This proverbial saying, true in relation to every man, is preëminently so in respect to a minister of Christ. But a minister's reputation among his own people, is the fruit and reward, not of a single splendid achievement, not of one or even many sermons of great power and eloquence; but of all the public, social and private manifestations of his character, from the beginning to the close of his ministry. Young ministers, zealous to do good, and it may be, emulous of distinction, sometimes betray impatience and perhaps a little envy of their fathers, because, while possessed themselves of cultivated minds and rich gifts of eloquence and grace, still their names are but little known, their opinions received with distrust, and their merits reluctantly acknowledged. Let not such forget that "confidence is always a plant of slow growth" —and that if ever a minister attains the honor of both KING and PRIEST among his people, it is only by virtue of a whole life of constant, devoted, exemplary piety and usefulness. *The people love and trust him, because they know him.* When, therefore, a minister has thus acquired a good name among his people, there is no mystery in the overflowings of their sorrow when he dies, and they follow him to the grave! A thousand sweet remembrances rush upon their minds. No wonder that the old men and mothers in Israel—who heard his first sermons, whose children he baptized and instructed, who enjoyed his counsels, sympathies and prayers in all their domestic afflictions—weep, when they think of him, and know that they shall see his face and hear his voice no more. No wonder that the middle-aged do him reverence, as the counsellor and guide of their youth; and that children—on whose heads he often laid his paternal hands in benediction, and whose very

name they have been taught to venerate—all gather around to look once more on his familiar face, and to be able to say, "we went to his funeral!" No wonder that the whole church bow as under the weight of a sore calamity. The people of God abroad lament that a father is fallen in Israel, and brethren in the ministry cry, "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" So when Samuel died, "All the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him." When Paul took his farewell of the brethren at Miletus, expecting soon to finish his course, "they all wept sore—sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." Of all the beautiful and affecting scenes in the history of good ministers, I know of nothing more so than the simple description of the funeral of Leigh Richmond. A friend says, "I was hastening to witness the sad obsequies of this excellent man. The bell tolled heavily, and seemed to smite on my ear with more than ordinary solemnity. Sorrow was depicted on every countenance, and the mourners crossed my path at every step. Even the aged and the sick, who had long heard from his lips the glad tidings of salvation, crept out of their cottages, resting on their crutches or leaning on the arm of friendship, to gaze on the mournful cavalcade, and weep over their melancholy bereavement." Not materially unlike this was the scene at the funeral of Payson, and of Emmons. So whenever a good and faithful minister dies, his name is embalmed in the hearts of a bereaved people. About to deposite his cherished remains in the grave in the hope of a glorious resurrection, they submissively say:

"Rest, man of God! Thy labors cease,
And we, thy sorrowing children, come
To lay thee in the grave in peace,
And weep around thy hallowed tomb.

Thou wert our father, friend and guide;
Our faithful shepherd, tried and true.
For all, for whom the Saviour died,
Thy life, a deathless pattern drew!"

God grant that we, fathers and brethren, may so fulfil our ministry, that in a good old age, we may be followed to our graves by a well instructed, devout and affectionate people; and in the day of judgment be permitted to welcome them to the right hand of our Saviour, to be accepted with them through his merits. Amen.

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WORCESTER, MASS.

SPONTANEOUSNESS IN CHRISTIAN DUTY.

"For to their power (I bear record) yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." II. Corinthians viii. 3.

The connection in which these words are found, will be seen by referring to the first five verses of the chapter. Paul is speaking particularly of the liberal contributions of the churches in Macedonia for the suffering Christians in Judea. Though these churches were themselves "in a great trial of affliction," and had formidable difficulties to surmount in order to sustain their own ground and enjoy the blessings of their new hope and precious faith, yet, without waiting to be urged, to the extent, not of their convenience merely, but of their ability, they were ready to minister to the wants of their brethren. Nay, their inclination exceeded the measure of theirpower. They would have done more if they could; but as it was, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. "With much entreaty, they prayed that Paul and Timothy would receive the gift and *take upon them the fellowship of ministering to the saints.*" One can hardly avoid pausing here to ask, how soon would the treasury of the Lord be filled to overflowing, and ample means be provided for prosecuting with new vigor the enterprises of benevolence, if Christians at this day had the same "mind to the work," the energy of purpose, the preparation for and forwardness in their work, which characterized the new and feeble churches of Macedonia? Nor was it in respect of this grace only, that these churches were deserving of commendation. For Paul says in his first Letter to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." Indeed, it seems to have been characteristic of the early Christians generally, that they entered with all the heart into the realities of the new faith, and were ready to submit to any self-

denial, to encounter any trial, to perform any duty, which the Master demanded of them. Paul and Timothy "give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and abound in prayer for the Christians at Colosse, on hearing of their faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which they had to all the saints." This certainly is very high testimony to the piety of those Christians; for Paul had most exalted conceptions of the standard with which those, professing godliness, should be compared. In like manner, he addresses the brethren at Philippi, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel, from the first day until now." In a similar style, he bears testimony to the fervent, active, and steadfast piety of other churches.

Of the Christians also who lived in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, it is said, "Whatever their faults were, they had no hypocrisy in their *religious professions*. In these, they were altogether whole-hearted and sincere, and they performed their duty, so far as they knew it. They were ready, at any time, to sacrifice their all for Christ; and when they said that they gave up themselves and all they had to be the Lord's, they meant just what they said, and shrunk not from any of the responsibilities involved in such a profession. It was their simple, implicit, whole-hearted faith, which gave them their mighty power."

Are not these examples full of instruction and admonition to Christians of the present day? The primitive disciples were *ready* to every good word and work. "Not by constraint, but *willingly*," they gave themselves to the duties of their high calling. As Titus, "being more forward, *of his own accord* went to his labors among the churches, so private Christians, freely, cheerfully engaged in the performance of the will of God. It seems as if they could hardly be denied the privilege of doing according to their ability in promoting the kingdom of Christ." According to their power, yea, and beyond their power, *they were willing of themselves;* Praying us with much entreaty that we should receive the gift.

The passage thus introduced to our notice will allow us to consider the importance of

SPONTANEOUSNESS IN CHRISTIAN DUTY.

I mean by the phrase, a constant readiness on the part of Christians to fulfil all their obligations to Christ, to the Church, to themselves and the world. They should not wait to be urged with accumulated and impulsive motive from without; but, being sure that they know the will of God, should cheerfully, of their own accord, perform it. So heartily should they respond to the claims of the Gospel upon their souls, bodies, time, talents and professions, that it would be their most painful act of self-denial not to yield to them. So truly should they love Christ and his Church, that nothing would grieve them more, than not to be permitted, to the extent of their ability, to advance their in-

terests. Instead of waiting to be called upon, instead of making excuses, instead of endeavoring to find an opiate for the conscience on account of neglected obligation and broken vows, they should be hourly asking, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* and most cheerfully doing or suffering the whole will of God in reference to them.

"And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service. And the children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring." So also David, in preparing for the structure of the Lord's temple, says, "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God—because I have set my affection to the house of my God;" and he inquires, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" "Then the chiefs of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel offered willingly. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offer willingly to the Lord; and David the king, also, rejoiced with great joy."

These instances happily illustrate the idea intended to be conveyed by the phrase, *spontaneousness in Christian duty.* You perceive there was no reluctance, no drawing back, no waiting for others, in the cases here specified. Their hearts were in the work, and nothing would have pained them more, we may suppose, than not to enjoy the privilege of contributing their part for the service proposed. Indeed, in the first instance, the people, we are told, brought much more than enough for the service of the work—and Moses caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." That expresses it with beauty and clearness. When Christians look with an earnest eye upon their relations to Christ and his cause, when they cherish a deep sense of individual obligation and personal responsibility; when they meditate on the love of Jesus until constrained to exclaim,

> "Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demand my life, my soul, my all;"

when they feel willing, nay more than barely willing—when they *delight to do* the will of God, and pant to do or suffer just what they believe will most please their Master; in a word, when their first care is to ascertain duty, and their irrepressible desire to perform it in all circumstances and at all times;—then, and then only, do they embody in their own life and experience the idea of *spontaneousness in Christian duty.*

If I may borrow analogies from sensible objects, I would say of one who does duty of his own accord, from the impulses of his own free will, guided of course by the word, and under the influence of the Spirit of God, that he is like the overflowing vessel, which only asks for vent, that it may be somewhat relieved from its oppressive fulness. His opposite is one that requires constant filling from extraneous agency; sounds hollow; if permitted, or even solicited, sends forth no jets, gives you no impression of fulness, or of energy, or of life. The former is like the horse that panteth for the goal and devoureth the space before him, enjoying every motion of his own muscles and limbs; the latter like the hack that needs constant urging with lash or spur. This is the personification of indolence, whose movements are a burden, whose practical theory is, that walking is better than running, standing still better than walking, sitting better than standing, and lying down better than all; that of the man of high health and buoyant life, whose walk scarcely raises the dust, whose motion is a spring and a joy. The overflowing, irrepressible, unfailing fountain, whose waters leap forth in music and gladness, carrying with them refreshment and blessings wherever they find their joyous way, is an apt emblem of the Christian, who, "not of constraint, but willingly," engages in the service of Christ.

I have multiplied illustrations of this point, influenced by a desire that each one, not those merely who are accustomed to give earnest heed to the things which they hear—but that each one who is distinctively styled a Christian, may have a clear view of what is meant *by acting willingly, of one's accord, from the spontaneous promptings of one's own full and cheerful heart.*

Is it necessary now, to say a single word to enforce the importance of this? Will not every professed Christian admit, without the slightest hesitation, or a moment's wavering, that he is under imperative obligation to exemplify this idea in his own life? Yet, it may be desirable to refresh our minds by passing in review some of those considerations which urge this duty. It is so easy to forget some of the plainest duties, so common to admit a thing without question, and yet fail utterly to reduce that thing to every-day practice, that on many points of clear and obvious moral obligation, we need line upon line and precept upon precept. Let me then ask

I. *If this spontaneousness in Christian duty is not a test of sincerity?* How otherwise can you obtain evidence yourself—how give evidence to others, that you are truly a child of God? Is it not one mode with which the Spirit witnesseth with our spirits to our adoption into Christ's spiritual family, that we love to do just what our divine Master would have us? "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—"I delight to do thy will, O my God"—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, O God"—"I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments;"—these, and utterances like these, are the indications of a sincere and earnest faith and love. Without any indications of this sort, where shall evidence be sought

or found, that the soul knows anything, experimentally, of adoption? What though you profess to be a saint, and subscribe with your own hand to be the Lord's. What though you find a place with tolerable punctuality in the house of prayer and at the sacramental table; if your heart prompt you not to "walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." Suppose you are more earnest in worldly pursuits than in the duties of religion,—are more interested in compassing the purposes of personal emolument and selfish enjoyment, than in sustaining the worship of God, laboring for the conversion of sinners, and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you have evidence yourself, that you are sincerely pious? Can you afford such evidence to others?—"Be not deceived"—"God looketh upon the heart;" and if that heart be not filled with love to him—love that prompts to the vigorous exercise of all the powers of the soul in his service—love that makes labor, and even suffering a pleasure, because it is well-pleasing to the Master—he utters the decision with an emphasis that cannot be misunderstood—*One thing thou lackest.* When giveth the son evidence most conclusive that he sincerely loves his father? When he goes about his father's business with downcast eye, with halting steps, with reluctance and irksomeness painted on every feature? When he goes, because he feels that he must, or else be punished? When he is wishing so intensely as almost to utter it aloud, that he could escape the burdensome task? Or is it, when he waits only just long enough to understand what his father's will is, and then with joy beaming in his eye, and lightness in every step, hastens to execute it? In this case, sincere and earnest love prompts to duty; in that, fear of consequences if duty be neglected. One needs the lash and spur; the other, spurning all outward incitement, springs joyously on his course. This is a law unto himself—acting out the promptings of his own heart; that needs the coercive impulse of a law from without, which says, *This do, or die.* Can the latter be sincere? Is his heart right in the sight of God? Can the former be otherwise than sincere? His true and burning love is seen in every motion, is disclosed in the glance of the eye, utters itself in every word of the tongue.

II. *Likeness to Christ demands this free will effort.* This has been implied in the foregoing remarks; let it now be distinctly announced. We profess to be his disciples. We call ourselves by his name. We have vowed to walk in his steps. We are pledged to one another and to him, before heaven and earth, that we will more and more clearly exhibit his moral image in our own characters. But can we do it, without being *willing of ourselves*, to engage in every good word and work? "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But what was his spirit? "Then said I, lo I come to do thy will, O God." "I delight to do thy will, O my God." His whole life, his sufferings, his death, all showed that his heart was set on the great work; that he went to it not as a task from which he would gladly have been excused, but as a labor of love which he would cheerfully

execute, at whatever personal sacrifice or expenditure.—Are we his disciples? Would we be followers of him as dear children? Beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, would we be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord? Then must we, cheerfully, of our own accord, be about our Father's business. We must not be reluctant, and draw back, and wait for others to perform what evidently belongs to us; but, laying aside every weight, and the easily-besetting sin, run with patience and with joy the race set before us, "*looking unto Jesus.*"

III. *This duty may be enforced by urging the principle of justice.*—You exact this in other cases. You are utterly dissatisfied with a child, if he serve you from fear and not from love. The thought that one whom you love so well, for whom you are doing so much, and of whom you require only what is perfectly reasonable, should not cordially and without fear of punishment enter into your views and perform your will respecting him, is extremely trying and displeasing to you. Let the same rule bear with equal force upon your own relations to your Father in heaven. On the principle of simple justice, in accordance with the teachings of your own conscience, ought you not with gladness and joy to do *your* Master's will?

Again: when you employ a person to do a service for you, and offer him a fair compensation, you have a right to expect that he will cheerfully fulfil his obligation to you,—that he will not cheat you—will not slight or neglect any part of it. Have you not engaged voluntarily to serve a divine Master for life? The prospect of a reward before you is sufficiently large to meet your highest wish, and gratify your most intense longing. How, then, can you regard the principle of simple honesty, without doing from the heart, with a free will that asks not, that brooks not urging, the things involved in a Christian profession?

Further; you expect and have reason to expect, that those whom you have called "to watch over you in the Lord," and "feed you with knowledge and understanding," will be the servants of the church for Jesus' sake, with hearty cheerfulness and prompt good will. If you have occasion for suspecting that they follow Christ for the loaves and fishes; that they study, and preach, and labor with you, merely or mainly for the living afforded them, you are dissatisfied, and rightly so. If they fail to bring beaten oil into the sanctuary; if they neglect their appropriate calling, to cultivate a farm, or prosecute plans for accumulating property; if they make their pastoral visits, enter the pulpit, administer the ordinances, attend the regular meetings of the church as if it were a painful task—a work for which they have no relish and in which they have no heart—you say at once, that they have either mistaken their calling, or that they have cause for immediately humbling themselves before God, and returning to their "first love." You deem it altogether essential, that they, without waiting to be urged, without complaint or misgiving, consecrate themselves wholly to their

work, and from the constant and spontaneous pressure of holy love outward, go as cheerfully to their labors, as the miser to his gold, the soldier to his post of honor. Well, so it should be, past all question. But then, the rule works in more than one direction. "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" If you see that this is duty, and justly demanded in the case of those who minister at God's altar, you may and should see, that it is duty and imperatively required, in the case of all who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ. We read of those who "laid heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, and grievous to be borne; but they themselves touched them not with one of their fingers." Be not ye, in the remotest respect, like unto them. Draw the line of duty fairly around others indeed; but slacken it not when it begins to press upon yourselves. From your child, from your hired servant, from those who minister to you in holy things, expect a cheerful performance of the duties involved in the respective cases: but forget not, that consistency and justice demand the same of you.

Perhaps I might as well introduce under this particular the fact, that you have solemnly promised this spontaneousness in Christian duty, before God and the church. When you first began to contemplate the religion of Christ, if you did it aright, it was as a religion of the heart, a religion of love. When you first indulged a hope, that you had experienced the great change, by which an unhumbled sinner becomes a child of God, you felt that the great beauty and joy of the whole consisted in its involving the warmest and purest affections of the heart.

After taking time for reflection, prayer, and self-scrutiny, and deliberately making up your mind to own Christ before the world, you honestly, as we may hope, promised that you would be, to your dying day, a cheerful, active, whole-hearted Christian; that you would serve God of choice; that you would deny yourself, and take up every cross of your own free will, for Christ's sake; that you would "not of constraint, but willingly," fulfil all the obligations involved in a Christian profession. Suppose now, you should be reluctant to perform this or that self-denying duty. Suppose you should need pressing and urging, in order to give a punctual, wakeful, and cheerful attendance upon the services of God's house, and the weekly meetings of the church. Suppose your contributions for the support of the Gospel at home, and its diffusion abroad, should come hard at the best, and be stinted in measure when they do come. Suppose secret devotion, self-inspection, family prayer, study of the Bible, are irksome to you—that you attend to them at best rather to pacify conscience, than with joyful and willing heart. I have only to ask, on condition that the affirmative of all this is true, if there be not a wide distance between your actual, present life, and your actual, former profession—if there be not a wide space between promise and fulfilment—if there be not occasion to write at the top of every page of your daily life, *inconsistency and sheer dishonesty?*

IV. *The ministers of the church might address a far greater proportion of their sermons and their energies than they now do, directly to the impenitent,* if professed disciples of Christ would cheerfully and promptly come up to the measure of their own duties. It is indeed true that, on the most favorable supposition, it would be needful to preach many sermons and give multitudinous instructions for the purpose of enlightening, guiding, and elevating Christians. This will always be an interesting, important, and delightful part of a pastor's work. But, if there were a willing mind and a loving heart in them generally, the great thing that he would need to do would be simply to point out and illustrate the path of duty, and they would be prepared to enter and pursue it. He would not have to spend sleepless nights and anxious days in order to concentrate motives to urge them to do plain duty. Much less would he be every day in the week, on the search after a trumpet of greater power, through which he might send a blast sufficiently loud and dense to wake them from slumber. They would *not sleep,* as do others. They would be ready to co-operate with him in his plans of usefulness. Anxious mainly to know when they could labor to the best advantage, how they could direct their energies so as most favorably to affect the interests of Christ's kingdom. They would practically say to the spiritual watchman and guide, "We are ready for any service or any trial; only tell us where to go and what to do, that Christ may be honored and souls blessed."

Now, it is an occurrence not very infrequent, that the pastor has to exhaust his best energies and employ his most available hours, in devising means to rouse and urge to duty, the members of his church. He feels it to be the dictate of sound wisdom and the plain call of duty, to select subjects and study them with great care, and throw into their illustration and enforcement his best thoughts, his most pungent arguments, and to accumulate the most impressive motives at command, that he may open the dull eye, rouse the torpid sensibilities of those who profess to be members of Christ's living body, and cause the blood of spiritual life once more to course through the heart with energy and rapidity. The waters are so sluggish, that he must move them, or they will breed death. The elements are so still, that he must produce some commotion, or they will cease to support life.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Nor would they be so, in any case, if we could bear record, that "to their power and beyond their power," Christians were "willing of themselves," to engage in their appropriate work: Then might the minister of Christ have more time for study and meditation on the best means of awakening, convincing, and saving the impenitent and the lost. Then, as he prepared his sermons, feeling that his hours would be made strong by the consistency, sympathy and prayers of his church, could he lay himself out with unimpaired energy, with unfettered freedom of spirit, to awaken new feelings, and, under God, beget a new life, in souls hastening to death. Then, in the arrangement of his arguments and motives, in the selection of illustrations and analogies, to make all converge to

a practical and effective application; he would feel that he should not "labor in vain or spend his strength for naught."

If to all this be added the thought, that, encouraged by the prompt energy and cordial co-agency of his brethren in the church, counting not in vain upon their earnest prayers in his behalf, he will be altogether more likely to perform the whole round of his duties with increased vigor, and become a more able and successful minister of the New Testament; is not the motive to their fulfilling the high expectations they have raised, one which appeals to their best feelings as men and as Christians?

V. *This spontaneousness in Christian effort is enforced by its influence on others besides the ministers of the Gospel.* Whoever sets an example of it is administering a kind, yet severe reproof to every sluggish and inconsistent professor. More plainly and more emphatically than by words, he declares to every such one, "You have left your first love—you have wandered from God, and should immediately remember whence you have fallen, and repent." Let the majority of members in any church be such as "not by constraint, but willingly," are steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and that church will be a very uncomfortable place, not only for the hypocrite, but also for the backslider of every grade. You have seen it verified in a season of special religious interest. The Spirit of God has come down in answer to prayer. One after another has been aroused and humbled and opened his heart to welcome that Spirit as a constant guest, and finally, the great majority of the church have cordially given themselves to the work whereunto they were called. Do you not remember how difficult it was then for a professor to live without, as it were, "coming up to the help of the Lord, the help of the Lord against the mighty?" Would not any one have found it very hard work at that time to carry out the experiment with even apparent success, of serving God and mammon? of trying to be a Christian and manifest no deep and heart-felt interest in his Master's work? Thus every recreant disciple, every one who fails to cultivate and exhibit heartiness in his good work, is in circumstances which constantly reprimand and rebuke him for his sin, and urge him to duty, and tend to purify and elevate him.

Nor is this all. Examples of this spontaneous activity for Christ's sake are full of encouragement and strength to such as aim to be Christ's every day and in all circumstances. One alone, if he see all around him neglecting duty and conforming to the world, must have special communications from above, or he will be likely to yield to the influence which, as a strong current, sets away from God, and gradually sinks to the level of worldliness where dwell the many who have covenanted with Heaven. We all know the power of "evil communications to corrupt good manners."

But "they that walk with the wise shall be wise." They who are encouraged by members around them to be and do good, to strive after

eminent degrees of holiness, have not only the ordinary blessing of the Spirit—but all the social influences of virtue are enlisted in their behalf. The warm heart of one sends out pulsations to meet and mingle with those that come from a like heart in another. Thus the healthful energy of both is increased. Tongue speaks to tongue; eye enkindles eye; hand strengthens hand; conscience answers to conscience; and soul grapples itself to soul in a union, which is power for mutual help and mutual joy.

Then how such examples speak to the world! When our fathers and mothers made such efforts and submitted to such sacrifices in order to save their homes, their altars, and their children's inheritance from slavery; did it need any one to prove to the on-lookers of the world by elaborate arguments, that the fire of patriotism was burning brightly in their hearts? Was not such devotion to country, such readiness to send forth their sons to the hazard of a doubtful contest, such forwardness to deny themselves of almost the necessaries of life that the cause of freedom might prosper, an unanswerable proof of the reality and power of patriotism, a reproof to every coward and self-seeker; and a powerful means of securing allies and securing help in every form, to their cause? Thus earnestness and whole-heartedness in any good enterprise, is the most powerful means of defeating opposition to it and ensuring prosperity. So, emphatically is it in religion. Let Christians, not by compulsory process of argument and stringent motive, but "of their own accord," in the lifesomeness and gladness of glowing desire, engage in the pure and elevating services of godliness, and they speak a language to worldly men which every one can interpret for himself, and which is never spoken without effect. One who has graphically sketched the piety of the early Christians, says, "so simple-hearted, so pure-minded, so unaffectedly sincere were they in all their conduct, that they thereby win over multitudes even of unbelievers and atheists, and those who had the most violent prejudices of early education and constant habit against them and their doctrines. In like manner as since, hypocrites and half Christians, by their affectation of religion in profession and violation of it in practice, have given false impressions of Christianity, and made unbelievers and atheists and scoffers of those who in early life had been educated to believe and reverence the Bible."

If we, then, would let our light shine, so that others shall see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven; we must, according to our ability, *be willing of ourselves* to perform every service. If we would see sinners crowding the ways to Zion's spiritual temple, if we would see "much people added to the Lord," we must walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

Another thought should be suggested in order to show the full force of this particular. It is this: those who are born into the Kingdom of Christ, are usually nurtured under the regimen and trained to the standard of piety which are prevalent when they are thus born. That is, young Christians will be very likely to fix their eye on that style of

piety which is most constantly before them; and generally they will not sink very far below, nor rise very far above the average tone of spirituality which prevails in the hurch. If Christians will open their hearts wide for the entrance and indwelling of the Holy Spirit; if they will so welcome the presence of Christ by faith as to "be filled with all the fulness of God;" they will so elevate the standard of piety, that what is extraordinary now, shall be no more than the common level of Christian feeling—that what is now called a "revival," in the best sense of the term, shall only equal the usual exercise and exhibition of spirituality; and thus will they exert a mighty influence for good on all who are translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They will create such a spiritual atmosphere and furnish such spiritual nutriment for the newly-adopted spirit, that he will thrive and grow as he could not endure a different regimen, and thus far more speedily, and safely too, attain "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This deep experience of the love of God will quite transfigure their whole souls with love and power. "It will give them the wings of a seraph, the freedom and swiftness of a celestial nature." It will enable them to present so excellent and beautiful a specimen of the Christian character, so pure and faultless a model for imitation, that the false-hearted will be thrown back in despair, while the genuine sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty shall be excited to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," until transformed into the glorious image of their Redeemer.

In the light of this consideration, how the importance of our subject is magnified! It would seem as if no other motive could be needed to stimulate every Christian to seek for a fresh baptism from above. He must cultivate a deeper and a richer experience of God's love. He must endeavor to elevate the standard of Christian character, to convert what is now extraordinary into the usual tone of spirituality. He must be prompt and energetic in his work, giving continually the finest specimens of spontaneous activity in the service of the divine Master.

If it were needful to say another word to enforce the importance of this duty, it would be easy to show that the richest joys which the heart can experience in this world are connected with this spontaneous, free-will offering to God. A reluctant, compelled service is never a joyful one. A grudged offering is neither very acceptable to the recipient, nor very pleasant to the giver. He who professedly labors for God and the good of souls, not willingly, but of constraint, is a stranger to the best joys of the heart. If Christians would but always carry out the spirit of our text, would open their hearts wide and freely for the indwelling of Christ, and so welcome the Spirit that he would delight to abide in them as his own chosen temple, and thus go to their work as an obedient son hastens to anticipate the wishes of his father, the joy of the Lord would be their strength; and they would daily be receiving both a pledge and a foretaste of heaven's own blessedness. In this way alone can they enter into the spirit, and illustrate the precept of the Apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice."

In this way only can their religion be in them a "well of water springing up into everlasting life:"—their joys gush forth as from an overflowing fountain. But we must not dwell longer on this delightful topic.

This spontaneousness in Christian duty would have an important bearing on the world's conversion to Christ. It would increase the declarative glory of God as displayed in the view of angels and men, in preparing the disciples for afflictions and trials, in giving them the victory through Christ over death and the grave, in presenting them "with exceeding joy" before the Judge of quick and dead. It would augment their reward and glory through all coming eternity. These are all interesting and pertinent considerations, with which to magnify and enforce the importance of our subject. But the limits of our short discourse will not allow us to expatiate upon them.

A word of caution must not be forgotten. Let Christ's disciples be always filled with ardor and burning zeal, but let it always be the ardor of true and holy love, not the glow of a false, or the destructive brilliancy of an uncontrolled fire. Be "always zealously affected" in every good cause; it is "good" thus to feel and to act for God. No matter if your zeal rise as high, and impel as vigorously as an angel's, so be that it accord with knowledge. Let your heart, like the waters of a full vessel, be struggling for egress; but see that its outgushings are always in the right direction, that they are fraught with blessings, and blessings only. "Add to your faith, virtue:" that is, courage, manly vigor, the energy of a Christian soldier; but be sure to add to this, "virtue and knowledge." Let your glowing energies, your most zealous impulses, be ever under the control of reason and conscience, quickened and enlightened by the word of God and by prayer.

With this word of caution, the subject administers *a pointed rebuke.* If we are not in the habit, day by day, of abiding cheerfully by the obligations involved in our profession, of engaging heartily in the service of Christ; if it is easy for us to suggest palliations for neglect of duty, and difficult or irksome for us to move on the line of Christian obligation; if a slight cause detains us from the house of prayer, and from the regular appointments of the church; if the great reason why any suppose that we are Christians is, that they witnessed our profession, and have since seen us approach the communion table; if our closets, our Bibles, our family altars, our seats in the sanctuary, our places in the meeting for prayer, our dealings with men in the ordinary transactions of life, can tell of open or covert obliquities, coldness, omissions of service, task-work, compulsory formalities:—then is our subject full of reproof and full of warning to us. It speaks to us with an emphasis which we cannot misunderstand, "Remember whence ye are fallen and repent." If instead of speaking for God and conversing about Christ as we have met one another, and, as we have had favorable opportunity, commending religion to the impenitent, we have been ready to speak of anything, everything else; then, admitting that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," it is obvious that

our hearts' abundance has not been of the love of God, but of things "seen and temporal;" and then does our subject frown upon us in the severity of holy rebuke. If we have lost our interest in the world's conversion to Christ; if we have learned to make ingenious excuses for not contributing freely and generously to the enterprises of benevolence; if we have read without interest or desire of imitation the admirable example of the Macedonian churches, "who first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then in a great trial of affliction, let the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abound unto the riches of their liberality;" then are we indeed exposed to the withering rebuke of our divine Master, and have as much reason as Peter had, "to go out and weep bitterly."

In conclusion, our subject appeals with great tenderness and power to the best feelings and noblest principles of every disciple of Christ. To all it says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Yes, "*to your power, yea, and beyond your power,* BE WILLING OF YOURSELVES."

SERMON CCCLXXXVII.

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THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCE OF REPENTANCE.

"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—Acts iii. 19.

PETER and John healed a lame man in the temple. The man had expected no such thing. All he did or felt was to look at them steadfastly, and hope that in the depth of their compassion, they might give him a single silver piece to help him in his poverty. What was his astonishment, when Peter said, "No money!—but such as I have give I unto thee." "IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, RISE UP AND WALK." What was his astonishment, not merely to hear the words, but to feel strength rushing to his ancle bones, and himself obeying the instinct of his animal nature, with the delightful consciousness that he was a whole man!

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness waters shall break out and streams in the desert."

This lame man leaped for joy and praised God. "And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he. which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. And as they ran together, all, and gazed with stupid astonishment, looking no further than the naked fact, without seeking for a cause out of Peter and John,—Peter, reproving them, said, Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though *we* had done this thing? God has done it,—glorifying his Son Jesus,—and it is in His name, through faith in His name, that has made this man whole,—yea, the faith which is by HIM hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all;—yea, the faith which is by HIM, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you: and ye killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead. *Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*"

Peter thus came boldly up to the multitude of the Jews, in the most public place in Jerusalem, at the hour of largest concourse—the hour

of prayer—it being the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock in the afternoon. And he charges them with the highest crimes men could commit. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just—ye killed the Prince of Life,—your garments are red with the crime of murder,—and murder of no ordinary sort, but the most aggravated." Yet it is probable that not one of this multitude was directly instrumental in the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Christ. The meaning simply is, Ye assented in your hearts to what your Rulers did,—ye rejected Christ from the throne of your hearts, and ye rejoiced when the cruel indignity and scorn were put upon the Prince of Life, by nailing him to the cross. It was upon this charge, which they attempted neither to palliate nor deny, that Peter grounded his exhortation, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

My hearers, to this text thus introduced, I call your attention more particularly to its latter part,—"*that your sins may be blotted out:*"—the blessed consequence of repentance—the blotting out of sin.

Now, that sins are to be blotted out in any case, implies that somewhere they are written down.

I. *Where*, then, are they written down? Be this our FIRST inquiry. They are written in God's book. But does God keep a book, and write down in it daily transactions—sins—offences against his law and government? Yes, God keeps a book; and writes down all that you do that is wrong, and all that you feel in the secret recesses of the soul. There are two passages in the Bible of fearful interest on this subject. The candid reader of the Bible cannot read them, if his eyes are but a *little* opened, without a current of awe, not to say horror, rushing back from his veins to his heart. The first is the 139th Psalm.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but* lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

The second passage is in Revelations, xx. 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

1. The first of these passages asserts the *capacity* of God to take cognizance of human action, through its entire range; from the outward act to the inmost feeling. And the second asserts the *fact* that all are noticed and written down;—that they are made the basis of the judgment God will hold, and the sentence he will pronounce at last.

2. Again, your sins are written down on the conscience and the memory; that is, on your own soul. It may be that only the last lines of the long roll are legible to you; but God can at any moment develope that roll, so that from its one end to its other, you shall see it all; so that in an instant you shall read both its details and its sum. And he can hold it open, and hold it up, to the mind's eye, so that it shall never, never pass away. My hearer, how long could you bear to look at each and all of your sins with the conviction that you were not able to turn off the view for a moment, though panting ever so hard for the privilege?

3. Again, your sins *will* be written down *in the sight of all men*. The day of judgment will be a day of exhibition,—of declaration,—of public showing of all human deeds, unto all interested in God's government. If the principles of his government, and if his character compel him to punish, then it behooves him to let all intelligences understand the grounds of that punishment. This enters into our very idea of a moral government,—a government based on justice and intelligence. Therefore, will God cause the long roll of every sinner's sins to be wide unfurled and fixed immovably to the broad firmament, so that it shall be known and read of all men: so that if peradventure any bold blasphemer shall rise and say, "Why is this man adjudged to such a doom?" God shall say to the multitudinous assembly, "Read it there:"—so that the convicted sinner shall himself say, "Amen—read it there!".

And so also will that long roll of crime be transferred to the walls of the dreary prison of God's enemies; so that if the wretched outcast should desire oblivion of his crimes, there stands the authenticated catalogue—dread duplicate of his own soul. And should he desire that his associates in suffering and guilt might forget, there stands the evidence of his guilt. Like a hated spectre it follows him, it haunts him, it is the all-present and everlasting accusation of himself and vindicator of God.

Men's sins then are written down; in God's book—in the conscience. They will be written down in the sight of all men; and in the ultimate prison of the unpardoned, incorrigible sinner. They will be as it were nailed up on his prison walls; so that all within those walls shall know why he himself is there.

And now, would it not be a blessed thing for the sinner, at the judgment day, to have his sins blotted out? Look then,

II. At this consequence of repentance. Peter says, "Repent, that your sins may be *blotted out*. What then is it for sin to be blotted out? We have inquired what it is for sin to be written down,—what is it for sin to be blotted out?

1. First, it is to have our sins removed from God's view. It is as if the whole record of sinful acts and sinful feelings were struck out at one dash. Not that God will indeed forget them; but he will act as if he had never known them. "And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "As far as the east is removed from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him." And as David prayed in the fifty-first Psalm,—"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities," so God does. And when God thus blots out the iniquities of those who repent, he writes their names in another book—even the Lamb's Book of Life. "And another book was opened which was the book of life."

2. It is to have our sins blotted from the book of conscience. Not indeed that they will be so annihilated as that there shall be no memory of them; but blotted out in the sense that they will no longer give pain by the remembrance. They will no longer remain there as accusers, tormentors, terrifiers. They will no longer exist as pledges, signals, earnests of alienation from God and of a certain fearful looking-for of judgment. They will no longer be there like the mark on the forehead of Cain. In every such respect they are gone—gone—gone, sunk in the ocean wave, never to appear again. The conscience is at peace—tranquillized—perfected—as if there had never been any long catalogue of sins recorded upon it. Still there is *such* remembrance as preserves unimpaired the foundation of gratitude. It will dictate the song of redeeming love,—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

Once more; it is to have sins removed from the view and memory of all beholders. And this will come to pass from the altered character of the forgiven. Once, they were wicked, the enemies of God, clothed in all the moral deformity of sin, with marks on their foreheads like Cain's, with the record and catalogue of their sins nailed up on the heavens before them wherever they went. But now, their characters are changed, their robes are changed, they are white, their hands are washed; there is nothing about them to proclaim before them as they go, their former horrible character and deserts. But the character they possess through grace, will arrest the attention, and hold it, and absorb the contemplation of all who look upon them. And although God, from his infinite and unchangeable attributes, can never be ignorant; and although the indelible impressions on their own memory of what they once were, remain, so as to give ever more new relish and pathos and power to the song "Worthy is the Lamb;" still, their new characters, and the perfect conviction of the glorious blending of God's justice and mercy in their salvation, will take the place of all other thoughts in the minds of beholders.

Their sins are blotted out. Over the book, the blood of Christ has flowed—a mighty stream—and obliterated every mark. The glowing

fire of God's love has purified their souls, so that their excellences solely appear, not their previous deformities. Their enmity is taken away, and a reciprocity of love fills their souls, onward, for ever more.

And now, my hearers, in respect to this subject, where are we? Let us bring the subject directly home; let each one wrap himself in it; let each hold his mind to it, as a matter of personal, not of foreign concernment. Consider then,

1. In the first place, how great a matter this is,—to have sin blotted out. You think "it a great matter, when you hear that such and such an one of your acquaintance has come into possession, suddenly and unexpectedly, of a great estate; if another, contrary to all probability, has been elected to an honorable and highly lucrative office; if any young lady of worth, but in obscurity and destitution, is suddenly married into an elevated and honorable, and wealthy and happy connexion. You think it a great matter, when you hear or read of remarkable changes in the political world. And you would think it a great matter if you should go out this evening, and discover that Sirius, the most brilliant star in the heavens, no longer occupied its accustomed place, but was gone, vanished, annihilated.

But suppose, my hearers, that before the morrow's sun, it should be known here as a certain truth, and in heaven, too, that nine young immortals,* now before me, who came to me on Monday evening last, with the inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" had had their sins blotted out from God's book—from the burning record of a troubled conscience,—and that that record should never be nailed up in the dread prison of despair,—nor ever remembered in heaven, except as an occasion of one more pealing anthem of praise, "Unto him who loved us and washed us in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." This would be a matter of importance. This would transcend in importance the estate, the office, the marriage, the star.

Revert then to yourselves. To every sinner in this assembly, whether young, middle-aged, or old,—to every sinner, who, in the retirement of the closet, is compelled to say unto himself, "Soul, thou art in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," and to heaven, "God be merciful to me, a sinner:"—to every such one, I say, bearing the commission of the skies, that God, even thy God—the father, even thy father, stands ready to do this great thing for *you*:—To say to the recording angel, "Stay! reverse thy pen—draw it backward over all the space of months and years—of ten, twenty, forty, seventy years, even a whole life:—To say to some other ministering spirit, "Fly quickly down to Earth, and pour upon that troubled conscience the blood of Christ:"—To another, "Take the key that would open the eternal prison for that soul, and hurl it beyond creation's bounds,"—to say to him, "Welcome,

* Young ladies, members of a school, whom the writer hopes and believes to have been truly converted.

returning Prodigal, welcome to thy father's arms, to heaven, to the society of angels and the great company of the Redeemed."

I say, God is ready to do this great thing for *you*, if you will but repent and be converted. For, has not the Lord Jesus Christ died for this very end. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," saith the Apostle John. "Having therefore boldness," says Paul, "to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Christ." And Christ himself says—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And again, in the parable of the great supper, "Come, for all things are now ready." What now is the meaning of all this, if it is not that here is the fountain of cleansing, made *ready*. Here is the heavenly agent, the Holy Spirit, ready to give the new heart and build it up in holiness; here is the food of angels and of the redeemed in heaven made *ready*. O, then, come! for all things *are* now ready. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Why will you stay away and starve? Why wrap yourselves in the rags of your own self-righteousness, that *cannot* hide sin's deformity! Why will you run any longer the hazard, the dreadful hazard, of having that record of your sins nailed up—for my mind will not let go that thought—NAILED UP there on the walls of the eternal prison!

Pass onward then to another thought that struggles to conneet itself with this of God's willingness. Is this the way you are going to requite the willingness of God? While God is saying, "Come away, leave the world and its works,—the Devil and his snares; come, for all things are now ready,—the fountain, the heavenly agent, the food, the white robes, the mansions. Come, and your sins and iniquities will I remember no more;"—Is this the way you choose to requite the offer of such kindness? to slight it, to pass by on the other side, out of hearing, and not deigning to give the offer even a serious consideration. My hearers, here is kindness, before which, in the comparison, all human kindness that we have ever read or heard of vanishes and deserves never to be named. It is God—the great God—the Lord of heaven and earth—condescending to man, stooping down from heaven to earth. It is your Father, your heavenly Father, reaching forth an arm of tender compassion to you, even while he cannot look on your present character but with abhorrence. And He reaches forth that hand while his Son bleeds and dies. Nay, this is the only reason why he can do it; here only can Mercy and Truth meet,—Righteousness and Peace kiss each other.

"Here's love and grief beyond degree,
The Soul of Glory dies for men!"

"He shed a thousand drops for you,
A thousand drops of richer blood."

And this is the only theatre on which this kindness can be shown. It is here, then, on this theatre, and thus,—that is, in connection with dying groans, the dying groans of his Son, that the Father condescends

and stoops and entreats. It is in such connection that he says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentance are kindled together."

My hearers, the requital of such kindness with neglect and scorn will add to that catalogue of sin, of which we have been discoursing. It will add to it a fearful amount. It will pour fresh burning coals upon your troubled conscience. It will cause to stand out in higher relief, the awful characters of your guilt, as you shall read them upon those prison walls. O do not do it! do not add a crime deeper, blacker, deadlier than all—that of finally rejecting God's offered mercy. Though by your sins of every kind, degree and hue, you have practically given an assent to the cruel murder of the Prince of Life—the Holy One and the Just, even as Peter charged upon his audience in the temple, you *have* not, as I would fondly hope and believe, set your hand and seal in a final rejection of these offers. Some do this before death closes the mortal scene; but you have not, as I will believe. Therefore, I say, and I would say it if I could with an angel's voice, forbear to do it—forbear, for Heaven's love and Christ's love forbear. In the name of the blessed God, of angels and of men,—in Christ's name, in the name of his bleeding hands and bleeding side—do not do it. "Do what?" do I hear you say?—*Refuse* to set your hand and seal to the instrument that bars the doors of Heaven against you for ever,—that repulses with your own hand the last offer to have your sins blotted out. O! repent and be converted now. God will not always wait. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." God will not wait always. It is unreasonable in you to expect that he will always wait. Therefore, Repent now, that your sins may be blotted out.

And now, my Hearers, I seem to stand near some dividing line of Time's rapid course. The old year has almost gone; the new one nearly come. You stand on its threshold, but will you advance into its inner apartments? Will you range through all its walks? That, dear hearers, is known to God, but not to you. It may be, that the mandate has gone forth in respect to more than one of you, "cut it down; why cumbreth it the ground." It may have been said, "Let no more offers of mercy be made to some of you"—they have been rejected too often and too long. Let judgment proceed and justice take its course. The soul that sinneth and will not repent, shall die. "I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest."

But, Sinner, "we hope better things of you, though we thus speak, and things that accompany salvation." Listen then, listen to the voice of Time, as well as to the other voices of God. Let not Time complete another degree, however short, in your mortal career, before you have accomplished the work of repentance, and began to receive the blessed consequence thereof—the blotting out of your sins. Why shall not the beginning of the year be the beginning in your soul, of the everlasting song?